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NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE text of the present edition remains unaltered save for the incorporation in their places of the "emendations and additions" forwarded by the Author too late for insertion in the body of the work in its first edition, and of a few verbal corrections for which the English Editor owes his thanks to various reviewers.

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INTRODUCTION

(PREFACE TO THE FIRST AND SECOND GERMAN EDITIONS)

THE author's purpose in the present work [1] has been to give an exact historical and psychological picture of Luther's personality, which still remains an enigma from so many points of view. He would fain present an accurate delineation of Luther's character as seen both from within and from outside throughout the history of his life and work from his earliest years till his death. He has, however, placed his hero's interior life, his spiritual development and his psychic history well in the foreground of his sketch.

The external history of the originator of the great German schism has indeed been dealt with fully enough before this. Special historical studies on the various points of his career and times exist in great number and are being daily added to. Whenever necessary, the author has made use of such existing material, although these works are only rarely quoted, in order not to overload the book.

Everyone knows with what animation Luther's life has recently been discussed, how his doctrines have been probed, and how they have been compared and contrasted with the theology of the Middle Ages. The Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, a work of Luther's youth, which was first made use of by Denifle and which now exists in a printed form, has supplied very important new material for the study of the rise of his opinions. With the assistance of this work it has become possible to give an entirely new explanation of how the breach with Rome came about. With regard to the actual questions of dogma, it has been my endeavour to bestow upon them the attention necessary for a right comprehension of history; at the same time the theological element can only be considered as secondary, our intention being to supply an exact portrait of Luther as a whole, which should emphasise various aspects of his

[1] *Luther*, von HARTMANN GRISAR, S.J. (Herdersche Verlagshandlung, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1911–12).

mind and character, and not to write a history of dogma, much less a controversial or theological tract. The investigation of his mind, of his intellectual and moral springs of action, and of the spiritual reaction which he himself experienced from his life's work, is indispensably necessary if we wish to do justice to the man who so powerfully influenced the development of Europe, and to form a correct idea of the human sides, good as well as bad, of his character.

We have preferred, when sketching the psychological picture, to do so in Luther's own words. This method was, however, the most suitable one, in spite of its apparent clumsiness; indeed it is the only one which does not merely put the truth before the eyes of the reader, but likewise the proofs that it is the truth, while at the same time giving an absolutely life-like picture. It has frequently been necessary to allow Luther to speak in his own words in order that in matters which have been diversely interpreted, or on which he was somewhat uncertain, he may be free to bring forward the pros and cons himself; we have thus given him the fullest opportunity to defend or accuse himself. If, for this reason, he is quoted more often than some readers may like, yet the originality of his mode of expression, which is always vivid, often drastic, and not infrequently eloquent, should suffice to prevent any impression of tiresomeness.

Luther's personality with all its well-known outspokenness has, as a matter of course, been introduced, unvarnished and unexpurgated, just as it betrays itself in the printed pamphlets, which as a rule give so vivid a picture of the writer, in the confidential letters, and in the chatty talk with his friends and table-companions. In a book which, needless to say, is not destined for the edification of the young, but to describe, as an historical work should, the conditions of things as they really were, the author has not thought it permissible to suppress certain offensive passages, or to tone down expressions which, from the standpoint of modern taste, are often too outspoken. With regard to the Table-Talk it may at once be stated that, by preference, we have gone to the actual sources from whence it was taken, so far as these sources are known, i.e. to the first Notes made by Luther's own pupils and recently edited from the actual MSS. by Protestant scholars such as Preger, Wrampelmeyer, Loesche, Kroker, and others.

In order to preserve the character of the old-time language, the original words and phrases employed by Luther, and also by his friends, have been, as far as possible, adhered to, though not the actual mode of spelling. A certain unequalness was, however, unavoidable owing to the fact that some of Luther's Latin expressions which have been translated into modern German appear side by side with texts in old German, and that in the first written notes of the Table-Talk frequently only half the sentence is in German, the other half, owing to the use of Latin stenography, or because the speakers intermingled Latin and German haphazard, being given in Latin. Some difficulties presented by the German of that day have been made plain to the reader by words introduced in brackets.

In selecting and sifting the material, a watchful eye has been kept not only on Luther's mental history, but also on the Luther-Legends, whether emanating from advocates of the Wittenberg Doctor or from his Catholic opponents. It is a remarkable phenomenon only to be explained by the ardent interest taken in the struggle which Luther called forth, how quickly and to what an extent legendary matter accumulated, and with what tenacity it was adhered to. The inventions which we already find flourishing luxuriantly in the earliest panegyrics on the Reformer and in the oldest controversial works written to confute him (we express no opinion on the good faith of either side), are many of them not yet exploded, but continue a sort of tradition, even to the present day. Much that was false in the tales dating from the outset, whether in Luther's favour or to his disadvantage, is still quoted to-day, in favour of or against him. In the light of a dispassionate examination the cloud-banks of panegyrics and embellishments tend, however, to vanish into thin air, though, on the other hand, a number of dark spots which still clung to the memory of the man—owing to hasty acceptance of the statements of older anti-Lutheran writers, have also disappeared.

The Protestant historian, Wilhelm Maurenbrecher, declared in 1874 in his "Studien und Skizzen zur Geschichte der Reformationszeit" (p. 239), that a good life of Luther could not soon be written owing to the old misrepresentations having given birth to a *fable convenue;* "the rubbish and filth with which the current theological view of the

Reformation period has been choked up, intentionally or unintentionally, is too great, and the utter nonsense which it has been the custom to present and to accept with readiness as Luther's history, is still too strong." Maurenbrecher, speaking of the Protestant tradition, felt himself justified in alluding to "a touching affection for stories which have become dear." During the forty years or so which have elapsed since then, things have, however, improved considerably. Protestant scholars have taken on themselves the honourable task of clearing away the rubbish. Nevertheless, looking at the accounts in vogue of Luther's development, one of the most recent historians of dogma, writing from Luther's own camp, at the very commencement of a work dealing with the Reformer's development, declares: "We still possess no reliable biography of Luther." So says Wilhelm Braun in his work, "Die Bedeutung der Concupiscenz in Luthers Leben und Lehre" (Berlin, 1908).

The excrescences on the Catholic side have also been blamed by conscientious Catholic historians. I am not here speaking of the insulting treatment of Luther customary with some of the older polemical writers, with regard to which Erasmus said: "*Si scribit adversus Lutherum, qui subinde vocat illum asinum, stipitem, bestiam, cacodæmonem, antichristum, nihil erat facilius quam in illum scribere*" ("Opp.," ed. Lugd., 3, col. 658); I am speaking rather of the great number of fables and false interpretations which have been accepted, mostly without verification. Concerning these Joseph Schmidlin says in his article, "Der Weg zum historischen Verständnis des Luthertums" (III., "Vereinsschrift der Görresgesellschaft für 1909," p. 32 f.): "The Luther-problem has not yet found a solution. . . . To what an extent the apologetico-dogmatic method, as employed by Catholics, can deviate from historical truth is proved down to the present day by the numerous controversial pamphlets merely intended to serve the purposes of the moment. . . . The historical point of view, on the contrary, is splendidly adapted to bring into evidence the common ground on which Catholic and Protestant scholars can, to a certain extent, join hands."

While confronting the fables which have grown up on either side with the simple facts as they are known, I was, naturally, unwilling to be constantly denouncing the

authors who were responsible for their invention or who have since made them their own, and accordingly, on principle, I have avoided mentioning the names of those whose accounts I have rectified, and confined myself to the facts alone; in this wise I hope to have avoided giving offence or any reason for superfluous personal discussions. I trust that it is clear from the very form of the book, which deals with Luther and with him alone, that the history of the Wittenberg Doctor is my only concern and that I have no wish to quarrel with any writer of olden or more recent times. I have been able to profit by the liberty thus attained, to attack the various fables without the slightest scruple.

With regard to the other details of the work; my intention being to write a psychology of Luther based on his history, it necessarily followed that some parts which were of special importance for this purpose had to be treated at greater length, whereas others, more particularly historical events which had already been repeatedly described, could be passed over very lightly.

Owing to the psychological point of view adopted in this work the author has also been obliged to follow certain rules in the division and grouping. Some sections had to be devoted to the consideration of special points in Luther's character and in the direction of his mind, manifestations of which frequently belong to entirely different periods of his life. Certain pervading tendencies of his life could be treated of only in the third volume, and then only by going back to elements already portrayed, but absolutely essential for a right comprehension of the subject. Without some such arrangement it seemed impossible to explain satisfactorily his development, and to produce a convincing picture of the man as a whole.

Although a complete and lengthy description has been devoted to Luther's idea of his higher mission (vol. iii., ch. xvi.)—a subject rightly considered of the greatest interest—yet the growth of this idea, its justification, and its various phases, is really being dealt with throughout the work. The thoughtful reader will probably be able to arrive at a decision as to whether the idea was well founded or not, from the historical materials furnished by Luther himself. He will see that the result which shines out from

the pages of this book is one gained purely by means of history, and that the mere scientific process is sufficient to smooth the way for a solution of the question; to discuss it from a sectarian standpoint never entered into my mind.

The writer's unalterable principle on this point has been, that in historical studies the religious convictions of the author must never induce him to set aside the stubborn facts of the past, to refuse their full importance to the sources, or pusillanimously to deny the rightful deductions from history. This, however, does not mean that he has imposed on himself any denial of his religious convictions. Just as the convinced Protestant, when judging of historical facts, cannot avoid showing his personal standpoint, and just as the freethinking historian applies his own standard everywhere in criticising events both profane and religious, so the Catholic too must be free to express his opinion from the point of view of his own principles as soon as the facts have been established. The unreasonableness and impossibility of writing a history from which personal convictions are entirely absent has been recognised by all competent authorities, and, in a subject like that here treated, this is as plain as day. Such an artificial and unreal history of Luther would surely be dreary and dull enough to frighten anyone, apart from the fact that Luther himself, whose fiery nature certainly admitted nothing of indifference, would be the first to protest against it, if he could.

Is it really impossible for a Catholic historian to depict Luther as he really was without offending Protestant feelings in any way? Without any exaggerated optimism, I believe it to be quite possible, because honesty and historical justice must always be able to find a place somewhere under the sun and wherever light can be thrown, even in the most delicate historical questions. In the extracts from my studies on Luther (cp. for instance the article "Der 'gute Trunk' in den Lutheranklagen, eine Revision" in the "Historisches Jahrbuch," 1905, pp. 479–507), Protestants themselves admitted that the matter was treated "with entire objectivity" and acknowledged the "moderate tone" which prevailed throughout. Such admissions were to me a source of real pleasure. Other critics, highly prejudiced in favour of Luther, actually went so far as to declare, that this impartiality and moderation was "all on

the surface" and a mere "ingenious make-believe," employed only in order the better to deceive the reader. They took it upon themselves to declare it impossible that certain charges made against Luther should have been minimised by me in real earnest, and various good aspects of his character admitted frankly and with conviction. Such discoveries, as far-fetched as they are wanting in courtesy, may be left to take care of themselves, though I shall not be surprised to be again made the object of similar personal insults on the appearance of this book.

I may, however, assure Protestant readers in general, whose esteem for Luther is great and who may be disagreeably affected by certain passages in this book which are new to them, that the idea of offending them by a single word was very far from my intention. I am well aware, and the many years I have passed at home in a country of which the population is partly Catholic and partly Protestant have made it still clearer to me, how Protestants carry out in all good faith and according to their lights the practice of their religion. Merely in view of these, and quite apart from the gravity of the subject itself, everything that could be looked on as a challenge or an insult should surely be avoided as a stupid blunder. I would therefore ask that the book be judged impartially, and without allowing feelings, in themselves quite natural, to interfere unduly; let the reader ask himself simply whether each assertion is, or is not, proved by the facts and witnesses. As regards the author, however, he would ask his readers to remember that we Catholics (to quote the words of a Swiss writer) "are not prevented by the view we hold of the Church, from rejoicing over all that our separated brethren throughout the world have preserved of the inheritance of Christ, and display in their lives, that, on the contrary, our best and sincerest esteem is for the *bona fides* of those who think otherwise than we" ("Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung," 1910, No. 52, December 29).

With regard to "inconvenient facts," Friedrich Paulsen wrote in his "Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts" (I^2, 1896, p. 196): "If Protestant historians had not yielded so much to the inclination to slur over inconvenient facts, Janssen's 'History of the German People' [English trans., 1901–1909] would not have made the impression it did—surely an 'inconvenient fact' for many Protestants." The

same respected Protestant scholar also has a word to say to those who were scandalised at some disagreeable historical home-truths which he had published, "as though it were my fault that facts occurred in the history of the Reformation which a friendly biographer of Luther must regret."

Even in the Protestant world of the present day there is a very general demand for a plain, unvarnished picture of Luther. "*Amicus Lutherus magis amica veritas*," as Chr. Rogge said when voicing this demand; the same writer also admitted that there was "much to be learnt from the Catholics, even though they emphasised Luther's less favourable qualities"; that, "we could not indeed expect them to look at Luther with our eyes, but nevertheless we have not lost all hope of again finding among them men who will fight the Monk of Wittenberg with weapons worthy of him." And further, "the scholar given up to historical research can and ought to strive to bring the really essential element of these struggles to the knowledge and appreciation of his opponents, for, if anywhere, then surely in the two principal camps of Christendom, large-minded polemics should be possible" ("Zum Kampfe um Luther" in the "Türmer," January, 1906, p. 490).

I have not only avoided theological polemics with Protestants, but have carefully refrained from considering Protestantism at all, whether that of to-day or of the two previous centuries. To show the effects of Luther's work upon the history of the world was not my business. The object of my studies has not been Lutheranism, but Luther himself considered apart from later Protestantism, so far as this was possible; of course, we cannot separate Luther from the effects he produced, he foresaw the results of his work, and the acceptance of this responsibility was quite characteristic of him. I will only say, that the task I set myself in this work closes with the first struggles over his grave. I may remark further, that the Luther of theology, even in Protestant circles, is being considered more and more as an isolated fact. Are there not even many Protestant theologians who at the present day allow him no place whatever in the theological and philosophical doctrines which they hold? Indeed, is it not an understood thing with many of our Protestant contemporaries, to reject entirely or in part the doctrines most peculiar and most dear

to Luther. Two years ago the cry was raised for " a further development of religion," for " a return from Trinitarian to Unitarian Christianity, from the dogmatic to the historic Christ," and at the same time the Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Konferenz at Hanover received a broad hint that, instead of wasting time in working for the Lutheran tenets, they would be better employed in devising a Christianity which should suit the needs of the day and unite all Protestants in one body. In these and similar symptoms we cannot fail to see a real renunciation of Luther as the founder of Protestant belief, for there are many who refuse to hold fast even to that rudimentary Christianity which he, in agreement with all preceding ages, continued to advocate. Only on account of his revolt against external authority in religious questions and his bitter opposition to the Papacy, is he still looked up to as a leader. There is therefore all the less reason for the historian, who subjects Luther to his scrutiny, to fear any reproach of having unwarrantably assailed the Protestantism of to-day.

As in these pages my only object has been to examine Luther's person, his interior experiences and his opinions from the point of view of pure history, I think I have the right to refuse beforehand to be drawn into any religious controversy. On the other hand, historical criticism of facts will always be welcomed by me, whether it comes from the Catholic or from the Protestant camp, and will be particularly appreciated wherever it assists in elucidating those questions which still remain unsolved and to which I shall refer when occasion arises.

Finally, an historical reminiscence, which carries us back to the religious contradictions as they existed in Germany a hundred years ago, may not be out of place. At that time Gottlieb Jakob Planck of Württemberg, Professor of Theology at Göttingen, after the lengthy and unprofitable polemics of earlier ages, made a first attempt to pave the way for a more just treatment by the Protestant party of Luther's history and theology. In his principal work, i.e. in the six volumes of his " Geschichte der Entstehung, der Veränderung und der Bildung unseres protestantischen Lehrbegriffs " (finished in 1800), he ventured, with all the honesty of a scholar and the frankness natural to a Swabian, to break through the time-honoured custom according to

which, as he says, all "those who dared even to touch on the mistakes of our reformers were stigmatised as blasphemers." "While engaged on this work," he declares, "I never made any attempt to forget I was a Protestant, but I hope that my personal convictions have never led me to misrepresent other people's doctrines, or to commit any injustice or even to pass an unkind judgment. Calm impartiality is all that can be demanded." I should like, *mutatis mutandis*, to make his words my own, and to declare that, while I, too, have never forgotten that I am a Catholic, I stand in no fear of my impartiality being impugned.

I would likewise wish to appropriate the following words taken from Planck, substituting the word "Protestants" for "Catholics": "The justice which I have thought it necessary to do to Catholics may perhaps excite some surprise, because some people can never understand one's treating opponents with fairness." But "I am convinced that, if my readers are scandalised, this will merely be on account of the novelty of the method. I really could not bring myself to sacrifice truth and justice to any fear of giving offence." Planck admits, elsewhere, speaking of Lutheran history, that compliance with the demands of impartiality in respect of certain persons and events which he had to describe, was sometimes "incredibly hard," and he proceeds: "There are circumstances where every investigator is apt to get annoyed unless indeed disinterestedness is to him a natural virtue. . . . It is exasperating [the present writer can vouch for this] to have to waste time and patience on certain things." So speaks a theologian renowned among Protestants for his earnestness and kindliness.

With the best of intentions Planck spent part of his time and strength in the chimerical task of bringing about a "reunion of the principal Christian bodies." He wrote a work, "Ueber die Trennung und Wiedervereinigung," etc. (on Schism and Reunion, 1803), and another entitled "Worte des Friedens an die katholische Kirche" (Words of Peace to the Catholic Church, 1809). It was his desire "to seek out the good which surely exists everywhere." The ideas he put forward were, it is true, unsuited for the realisation of his great plan. He was too unfamiliar with the organisation of the Catholic Church, and the limitations of his earlier education disqualified him for the undertaking

he had in view. What really shattered the hopes of reunion held by many during that period of triumphant Rationalism was, not merely the shallowness of the views prevailing, but above all the spirit of animosity let loose among all fervent Lutherans by the celebration, in 1817, of the third centenary of the Reformation. Catholics soon perceived that reunion was unfortunately still very far distant, and that, in the interests of the public peace, all that could be expected was the retention of mutual esteem and Christian charity between the two great denominations.

It is also my most ardent desire that esteem and charity should increase, and this growth of appreciation between Catholics and Protestants will certainly not be hindered by the free and untrammelled discussion of matters of history.

On the contrary, as a Protestant critic of Walter Köhler's "Katholizismus und Reformation" says, "it is to be hoped that historical investigation may lessen the contradictions, and if in this way it is possible to come closer together, not indeed perhaps to understand each other completely, yet at least to make some attempt to do so, then something deeper and more lasting will have been gained than at the time when Rationalism prevailed. The attempt then made to bring the parties together was the result of a levelling down of religious beliefs, now the same object is sought by penetrating more profoundly into the essentials of the different creeds" ("Theologische Literaturzeitung," 1907, p. 250).

The quotations from Luther's writings have been taken from the most recent Weimar edition so far as it at present reaches. What is not contained in the Weimar edition has been taken from the previous Erlangen edition (method of quotation: Weim. ed., Erl. ed.); the latter is, however, often quoted as well as the Weimar edition because it is more widely known and more readily available for reference.

Luther's letters have been taken from the new edition of the "Briefwechsel" by Enders, which is also not yet quite complete. The epistles of Luther's later years, which are still wanting in Enders' work, and also some of earlier date, are given as in volumes lii.–liv. of the Erlangen edition, where a great number of German letters are collected, or else as in the old edition of "Briefe, Sendschreiben und Bedenken" by De Wette-Seidemann. (*See* above, p. xvii. ff., "Correspondence," "Letters," "Works.")

With regard to the other sources of information we need only state, that until the whole of the "Tischreden" (Table-Talk) have been edited by Ernst Kroker in the Weimar series, we are com-

pelled to have recourse to the older German and Latin collections of the same, together with the original notes mentioned above (p. xx.). Of the German collection, in addition to the work of Aurifaber, the "Tischreden" of Förstemann-Bindseil and of the Erlangen edition (vols. lvii.–lxii.) have been used, and, for the Latin collection, Bindseil's careful edition (see p. xvi. f.).

From among the large number of lives of Luther which have been consulted I shall mention only the two latest, one by a Catholic, Denifle, and the other by two Protestants, Köstlin and Kawerau.

It is hardly necessary to say, that I brought to the study of the two last-mentioned works an absolutely independent judgment. The information—universally acknowledged as extremely valuable—supplied by Denifle's ponderous volumes on the relation between Luther's theology and that of the Middle Ages, was of considerable service to me. To Köstlin's biography of Luther, continued by Kawerau, I am indebted for some useful data with regard to the history and chronology of Luther's writings.

This most detailed of the Protestant biographies, and the most frequently quoted by me, offers this further advantage that in its judgment of Luther, his life's work, and his personal qualities, it occupies a middle line between two Protestant extremes. Köstlin having belonged to the so-called intermediary school of theology, the author, in his delineation of Luther, avoids alike certain excesses of the conservatives and the caustic, subtilising criticism of the rationalists. There is no such thing as a simple "Protestant opinion" on Luther; and Köstlin's intermediary treatment is the one least likely to lead a Catholic to commit an injustice against either of the extreme parties in Protestantism.

Does a Catholic opinion exist with regard to Luther's personal qualities and his fate? Does the much-discussed work of Denifle represent the "Catholic feeling"? That it does has frequently been asserted by those most strongly opposed to Denifle. Yet Denifle's manner of regarding Luther was, on the whole, by no means simply "Catholic," but largely biassed by his individual opinion, as indeed has ever been the appreciation by Catholic authors of the different points of Luther's character. Only on those points could Denifle's opinion strictly be styled "Catholic" where he makes the direct acknowledgment of dogmas and the essential organisation of the Church the standard for

Luther's views and reforms; and in this he certainly had on his side the repudiation of Luther by all Catholics. A "Catholic opinion," in any other sense than the above, is the sheerest nonsense, and the learned Dominican would certainly have been the last to make such a claim on his own behalf. The present writer protests beforehand against any such interpretation being placed on his work. The following statements, whether they differ from or agree with those of Denifle, must be looked on as a mere attempt to express what appears to the author to be clearly contained in the sources whence his information comes. In all purely historical questions, in questions of fact and their inferences, the Catholic investigator is entirely free, and decides purely and simply to the best of his knowledge and conscience.

A list of Luther's writings with the volumes in which they occur in the last two editions, as well as a detailed index of subjects and names at the end of the sixth volume, will facilitate the use of this work.

The author would like to take this opportunity of expressing his most cordial thanks to the Royal Bavarian Library of Munich, and also to the University Library in that city, for the friendly assistance rendered him. These rich sources of information have afforded him, during his frequent and lengthy visits to the Bavarian capital, what the libraries of Rome, which he had been in the habit of consulting for his History of Rome and the Popes of the Middle Ages (Eng. trans., 3 vols., 1911–12), could not supply on the subject here treated. The author will now return to the exploitation of the treasures of Rome and to the task he originally undertook and hopes to bring out, in the near future, a further volume of the History of Rome.

THE AUTHOR.

MUNICH, *January* 1, 1911.

VOL. I

LUTHER THE MONK

LUTHER

CHAPTER I

COURSE OF STUDIES AND FIRST YEARS IN THE MONASTERY

1. Luther's Novitiate and Early Life

On July 16, 1505, Martin Luther, then a student at the University of Erfurt, invited his friends and acquaintances to a farewell supper. He wished to see them about him for the last time before his approaching retirement to the cloister. "The bright, cheerful young fellow," as his later pupil, Mathesius,[1] calls him, was a favourite in his own circle. Those assembled to bid him farewell, amongst whom were also "honest, virtuous maidens and women,"[2] were doubtless somewhat taken aback at their friend's sudden determination to leave the world; but Luther was outwardly "beyond measure cheerful" and showed himself so light of heart that he played the lute while the wine-cup circled round.[3]

On the following morning—it was the feast of St. Alexius, as Luther remembered when an old man[4]—some of his fellow-students accompanied him to the gate of the Augustinian monastery and then, with tears in their eyes, saw the doors close upon him. The Prior, who was already apprised of the matter, greeted the timid new-comer, embraced him, and then, in accordance with the Rule, confided him to the Master of Novices to be initiated into the customs of the community.

In the quiet monastic cell and amid the strange new surroundings the student was probably able little by little

[1] "Historien," Bl. 3′.

[2] Account from the mouth of Luther's friend, Justus Jonas (*anno* 1538), made public by P. Tschackert in "Theolog. Studien und Kritiken," Jahrg., 1897, p. 578.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 187.

to master the excitement which, though hidden from outsiders, raged within his breast; for the determination to become a monk had been arrived at under strange, soul-stirring circumstances. He was on his way back to Erfurt, after a visit to his parents' house, when, near Stotternheim, he was overtaken by a thunderstorm, and as a flash of lightning close beside him threatened him "like a heavenly vision," he made the sudden vow: "Save me, dear St. Anne, and I will become a monk."[1] He appears also at that very time to have been reduced to a state of great grief and alarm by the sudden death of a dear comrade, also a student, who had been stabbed, either in a quarrel or in a duel. Thus the thoughts which had perhaps for long been attracting his serious temperament towards the cloister ripened with overwhelming rapidity. Could we but take a much later assertion of his as correct, the reason of his resolve was to be found in a certain vexation with himself: because he "despaired" of himself, he once says, therefore did he retire into the monastery.[2]

It was his earnest resolution to renounce the freedom of his academic years and to seek peace of soul and reconciliation with God in the bosom of the pious community. He persisted in keeping the vow made in haste and terror in spite of dissuading voices which made themselves heard both within himself and around him, and the determined opposition of his father to his embracing the religious state. Some were full of admiration for the energetic transformation of the new postulant. Thus the respected Augustinian of Erfurt, Johann Nathin, compared the suddenness and decision of his step to the one-time conversion of Saul into the Apostle Paul.[3] Crotus Rubeanus, the Humanist, then

[1] "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 187.

[2] Bei K. Jürgens, "Luther von seiner Geburt bis zum Ablassstreite," 1 Bd. Leipzig, 1846, p. 522, from the unpublished Cod. chart. bibl. duc. Goth, 168, p. 26. According to Loesche ("Analecta Lutherana," p. 24, n. 8) this MS. (B. 168) was written in 1553, and may be described as a collection of Luther's opinions on various persons and things. On page 26 it contains a list entitled "Studia Lutheri." We shall have occasion to deal with Luther's entrance into religion in volume vi., chapter xxxvii., 2.

[3] Hier. Dungersheim von Ochsenfurt, Professor of Theology in Leipzig, in a tract published in 1531 in "Aliqua opuscula magistri Hieronymi Dungersheym . . . contra M. Lutherum edita," written in 1530, "Dadelung des . . . Bekentnus oder untuchtigen Lutherischen Testaments," Bl. 14a. (Münchener Universitätsbibliothek, Theol., 3099, n. 552.)

stopping at Erfurt, in a later letter to Luther, expressed himself no less forcibly with regard to the heavenly flash which had made him a monk.[1] The brothers of the "German Congregation of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine" —such was the full title of the Order—on their part rejoiced at the acquisition of the highly gifted and promising youth, who had already taken his degree as Master of Philosophy at the University of Erfurt.

If the novice, after gradually regaining peace of mind within the silent walls, permitted his thoughts to recur to his former way of life, this must have presented itself to him as full of trouble and care and very deficient in the homely joys of family life. Luther's early career differed hardly at all from that of the poorest students of that time. He was born on November 10, 1483, in Eisleben in Saxony; his parents were Hans Luther, a miner of peasant extraction (he signed himself Luder) and Margaret Luther. They had originally settled in the town of Mansfeld, but had gone first to Möhra and then to Eisleben. Their gifted son spent his childhood in Mansfeld and first attended school there. His father was a stern, harsh man. His mother, too, though she meant well by him, once beat him till the blood came, all on account of a nut.[2] The boy was also intimidated by the stupid brutality of his teachers, and it does not appear that the customary religious teaching he received, raised his spirits or led to a freer, more hopeful development of his spiritual life. He was one day, as he relates later, "beaten fifteen times in succession during one morning" at school, to the best of his knowledge without any fault of his own, though, probably, not without having brought the punishment upon himself by insubordination and obstinacy. After that, in his fourteenth year, he received instruction in Magdeburg from the "Pious Brethren of the Common Life," and begged his bread by singing from door to door. A year later he went to Eisenach, where his mother had some poor relatives, to continue his Latin studies. In this town he still pursued the same hard mode of earning his living, until a charitable woman, Ursula, the wife of Kunz (Konrad) Cotta, received him into her well-to-do and

[1] "Hutteni Opp.," ed. Böcking, 1, p. 309.
[2] "Tischreden," ed. Förstemann, 4, p. 129; Mathesius, "Aufzeichnungen," p. 235.

comfortable household, furnishing him with food and lodging. Luther, in his old age, recalled with great gratitude the memory of his noble benefactress.[1]

As a boy he had experienced but little of life's pleasures and received small kindness from the world; but now life's horizon brightened somewhat for the growing youth.

Full of enthusiasm for the career mapped out for him by his father, that, namely, of the Law, he went in the summer of 1501 to the University of Erfurt. His parents' financial circumstances had meanwhile somewhat improved as the result of his father's industry in the mines at Mansfeld. The assiduous student was therefore no longer dependent on the help of strangers. According to some writers he took up his abode in St. George's Hostel.[2] He was entered in the Matriculation Register of the Erfurt High School as "Martinus Ludher ex Mansfelt," and for some considerable time after he continued to spell his family name as Luder, a form which is also to be found up to the beginning of the seventeenth century in the case of others (Lüder, Luider, Leuder). From 1512 he began, however, to sign himself "Lutherus" or "Luther."[3] The lectures on philosophy, understood in the widest sense of the term, which he first attended were delivered at the University of Erfurt by comparatively capable teachers, some of whom belonged to the Augustinian Order. The Catholic spirit of the Middle Ages still permeated the teaching and the whole life of the little republic of learning. As yet, learning was still cast in the mould of the traditional scholastic method, and the men, equally devoted to the Church and to their profession, who were Luther's principal teachers, Jodocus Trutfetter of Eisenach and Bartholomew Arnoldi of Usingen,[4] later an Augustinian, were well versed in the scholastic spirit of the day.

Alongside the traditional teaching of the schools there already existed in Erfurt and the neighbourhood another, viz. that of the Humanists, or so-called poets, which, though largely at variance with Scholasticism, was cultivated by many of the best minds of the day. Luther, with his vivacity of thought and feeling, could not long remain a stranger to

[1] Mathesius, "Historien," Bl. 3.
[2] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 744, n. 1, p. 31.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1, p. 754, n. 2, p. 166.
[4] N. Paulus, "Bartholomäus Arnoldi von Usingen," Freiburg im Breisgau, 1893.

them. With their spiritual head Mutianus at Gotha, close by, they formed one of the more prominent groups of German Humanists, although, so far, they had not produced any work of great consequence. The contrast between Humanism and Scholasticism, which was to come out so strongly at a later period, was as yet hardly noticeable in the Erfurt schools. Crotus Rubeanus, at that time a University friend of Luther's, became at a later date, however, the principal author of the "Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum," a clever and biting libel on monks and Scholastics, written from a Humanist standpoint. Crotus boasted subsequently of his intimate intercourse ("*summa familiaritas*") with Luther.[1]

Another Humanist friend whose spiritual relationship with him dates from that time, was Johann Lang, afterwards an Augustinian monk, with whom Luther stood in active interchange of thought during the most critical time of his development, as may be seen from the letters quoted below, and who, caught up by the Lutheran movement, left his Order[2] to become the first preacher of the new faith in Erfurt. The third name which we find in connection with Luther is that of Kaspar Schalbe, a cousin, or possibly a brother of the lady already mentioned, Mistress Ursula Cotta of Eisenach. Schalbe did not turn out any better than the others. A few years later, on being charged before the Elector of Saxony with a crime against morality, he was glad to avail himself of Luther's mediation with the Ruler of the land.[3] Finally, we also know that a later patron and supporter of Luther, the Humanist Spalatinus, was then carrying on his studies in Erfurt. George Burckhardt of Spalt—whence his name Spalatinus—was a student there from 1498 to 1502, and, from 1505 to 1508, was engaged as

[1] "Hutteni Opp.," ed. Böcking, 1, p. 309. Cp. 1, p. 307, ep. 1, "Martino Luthero, amico suo antiquissimo."

[2] Th. Kolde, "Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation und Johann von Staupitz," Gotha, 1879, p. 380.

[3] Luther to Spalatinus, July 3, 1526 (see "Briefwechsel," 5, p. 366). To the Elector Johann of Saxony, November 15, 1526: Luther's "Werke," Erl. ed. 54, p. 50 ("Briefwechsel," 5, p. 403). Johann of Saxony to Luther, November 26, 1526; "Briefwechsel," 5, p. 409. Luther to the same, March 1, 1527: "Werke," Erl. ed. 53, p. 398 ("Briefwechsel," 6, p. 27). On the three friends mentioned in the text, see A. Hausrath, "Luthers Bekehrung" ("Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher," 6, 1896, pp. 163–66 ff. and *idem*. "Luthers Leben," 1, 1904, p. 14 ff.).

a clerical preceptor in the immediate vicinity of the town. Luther and Spalatinus always looked on themselves later as early friends whom fate had brought together.

As a student, Luther devoted himself with great zest to the various branches of philosophy, and, carried away by the spirit of the Humanists, in his private time he studied the Latin classics, more particularly Cicero, Virgil, Livy, Ovid, also Terence, Juvenal, Horace and Plautus. At a later date he was able to make skilful use of quotations from these authors when occasion demanded. Amongst others, he attended the lectures of Hieronymus Emser, a subsequent opponent well worth his metal. Of his life during those years, which, owing to the laxity of morals prevailing in the town, must have been full of danger for him, we learn little, owing to the silence of our sources. Luther himself in his later years coarsely described the town as a " beer house " and a " nest of immorality."

Unlike his frivolous comrades, he was often beset with heavy thoughts, no doubt largely due to the after effects of his gloomy youth. Among his chums he was known as " Musicus," on account of his learning to play the lute, and as the " Philosopher," owing to his frequent fits of moodiness.

In the monastery, where the reader left him, he no doubt remained subject to such fits of depression, especially at the beginning when dwelling on his change of life. It is difficult to say how far the feeling of self-despair, which he mentions, had mastered him before his entry into conventual life. In later years, apart from the vow and the mysterious " heavenly terror," he also says that in leaving the world he was seeking to escape the severity of his parents. His statements, however, do not always agree. As for the precipitate vow to enter a monastery, he must have been well aware that, even if valid when originally made, it was no longer binding on him from the day when, after conscientious self-examination, he became aware that, owing to his natural disposition, he had no vocation for a religious life. Not every character is fitted for carrying out the evangelical counsels, and to force oneself into a mould, however good, for which one is manifestly unsuited is certainly not in accordance with the will of a wise and beneficent Providence.

Luther, agreeably with the statutes of the Order, during

the whole period of his novitiate and until the hour of his profession had arrived, was perfectly free to return to his fellow-students, the religious tie never having been intended to bring him misery in place of the happiness which it promises. Immediately after coming to the monastery, i.e. before his clothing, he was, according to the Rule, given considerable time in which to weigh earnestly, under the direction of an experienced brother of the Order, whether, as stated in the statutes of the Augustinians, "the spirit which was leading him was of God." Only after this did he receive the habit of the Order, apparently, however, in the same year, 1505. The habit consisted of a white woollen tunic and scapular, and a black mantle with a hood and wide sleeves to be worn over all.[1]

After the clothing began the novitiate, which lasted a whole year. During this period the candidate had not only to undertake a series of exercises consisting in prayer, manual labour and penitential works, but had also to discharge certain humiliating offices, which might help him to acquire the virtue of humility as practised in the Order. Out of consideration for the University and his academic dignity Luther was, however, speedily exempted from some of the latter duties. It appears that during his noviceship he was attentive to the rules, and that the superiors treated him with fatherly kindness. Although some members of the community may have observed the Rule from routine, while others, as is often the case in large communities, may not have been conspicuous for their charity—Luther refers to something of this kind in his Table-Talk—yet the spirit of the Erfurt monastery was, like that of most of the other houses of the Congregation, on the whole quite blameless. The novice himself, as yet full of goodwill, was not only satisfied with his calling, but even looked on the state he had chosen as a "heavenly life."[2]

From the very first, however, as he himself complains later, he was constantly "worried and depressed"[3] by thoughts connected with religion. He was sorely troubled by the fear of God's judgment, by gloomy thoughts on predestination, and by the recollection of his own sins. Al-

[1] See Paulus, "Joh. Hoffmeister," 1891, p. 4.
[2] Cp. below, p. 16. Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 73.
[3] To Hier. Weller (July ?), 1530, "Briefwechsel," 8, p. 159.

though he made a general confession in the monastery and renewed it again later, his confessions never gave him any satisfaction, so that his director laid on him the obligation not to hark back to things which caused him sadness of spirit nor to dwell on the details of his sins. "You are a fool," he once said to him; "God is not angry with you, but it is you who are angry with Him."

Those versed in the ways of the spiritual life are well aware that many a one aiming at perfection is exposed to the purifying fire of trials such as these. Traditional Catholic teaching and the experience of those skilled in the direction of conventual inmates had laid down the remedies most effectual for such a condition. What Luther himself relates later with regard to the encouragement he received from his superiors and brothers in the monastery, shows clearly that suitable direction, enlightenment and encouragement were not wanting to him either then or in the following years. He himself praises his "Præceptor" and "monastic pædagogue," i.e. the Novice-Master, as "a dear old man,"[1] who "under the damned frock was without doubt a true Christian."[2] It was probably he who said to him in an hour of trial that he should always recall the article of the Creed "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."[3] "What are you doing, my son?" he said to him on another occasion; "do you not know that the Lord has Himself commanded us to hope?"[4] words which made a great and unforgettable impression on him. Later, in the year 1516, he pointed out another brother, Master Bartholomew (Usingen), as the "best paraclete and comforter"[5] in the Erfurt monastery, as he could testify from his own experience. The monks knew well and impressed it upon his troubled mind that,

[1] Letter to the Elector (April or June ?, 1540), ed. Seidemann, "Lauterbachs Tagebuch," p. 197.

[2] In the Preface to Bugenhagen's (Pomeranus) edition of "Athanasius contra idolatriam," etc., Wittenbergæ, 1532. He there recalls having read the Dialogue of Athanasius and Arius "with zeal and a glow of faith," "*primo anno monachatus mei, cum Erfordiæ pædagogus meus monasticus vir sane optimus et absque dubio sub damnato cucullo verus christianus mihi cum sua manu descriptum dedisset legendum*" (Cp. "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 19, p. 100).

[3] Ph. Melanchthonis Vita Lutheri ("Vitæ quattuor reformatorum," Berolini, 1841), p. 5.

[4] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 19, p. 100.

[5] To George Leiffer, April 15, 1516, "Briefwechsel," I, p. 31. "Opp. Lat. exeg.," *ibid.*

through the merits of the Redeemer, and after earnest preparation of the soul, true forgiveness may be obtained, and that through the cross of Christ, and through it alone, we can do all things necessary, even in the midst of the bitterest assaults.

Luther, however, too often responded to such admonitions only by cherishing his own views the more. He continued morbidly to torment himself. This self-torture, at any rate during the first enthusiastic days of his religious life, may have assumed the form of pious scruples, but later it gradually took on another character under the influence of bodily affections. He did not, like other scrupulous persons, regain his peace of mind, because, led away by his distorted and excited fancy, he liked, as he himself admits, to dwell on the doubts as to whether the counsels he received were not illusion and deception. Sad experience taught him into what devious paths and to " what a state of inward unrest, self-will and self-sufficiency are capable of leading a man."[1]

The Superior or Vicar-General of the Saxon or German Augustinian Congregation to which Luther belonged was at that time Johann Staupitz, a man highly esteemed in the world of learning and culture.

He frequently visited Erfurt and had thus the opportunity of talking to the new brother whom the University had given him, and who may well have attracted his attention by his careworn look, his restless manner and his peculiar, bright, deep-set eyes. Staupitz soon began to have a great esteem for him. He had great influence over Luther, though unable to free him from the strange spirit, already too deeply rooted. To the sad doubts concerning his own salvation which Brother Martin laid before him, Staupitz replied by exhorting him as follows in the spirit of the Catholic Church : " Why torment yourself with such thoughts and broodings ? Look at the wounds of Christ and His Blood shed for you. There you will see your predestination to heaven shining forth to your comfort."[2] Quite rightly he impressed upon him, in the matter of confession and penance, that the principal thing was to arouse in himself the will to love God and righteousness, and that he must not pause before unhealthy imaginations of sin. The lines of thought,

[1] To Leiffer, *ibid.*
[2] "Lutheri Opp. Lat. exeg.," 6, p. 296.

however, which the imaginative and emotional young man laid bare to him, were probably at times somewhat strange, and it is Luther himself who relates that Staupitz once said to him : " Master Martin, I fail to understand that."

In spite of his inward fears Luther persevered, which goes to prove the strength of will which was always one of his characteristics. As the Order was satisfied with him, he was admitted at the end of the year of novitiate to profession by the taking of the three Vows of the Order. He received on this occasion the name of Augustine, but always preferred to it his baptismal name of Martin. The text of the Vows which he read aloud solemnly before the altar, according to custom, in the presence of the Prior Winand of Diedenhofen and all the brothers, was as follows : " I, Brother Augustine Luder, make profession and vow obedience to Almighty God, Blessed Mary ever Virgin and to thee Father Prior, in the name of, and as representing the Superior-General of the Hermits of St. Augustine, and his successors, likewise to live without property and in chastity until death, according to the Rule of our Holy Father Augustine." The young monk, voluntarily and after due consideration, had thus taken upon himself the threefold yoke of Christ by the three Vows, i.e. by the most solemn and sacred promise which it is possible to make on earth. He had bound himself by a sacred oath to God to prepare himself for heaven by treading a path of life in which perfection is sought in the carrying out of the evangelical counsels of our Saviour, and throughout his life to combat the temptations of the world with the weapons of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Such was the solemn Vow, which, later on, he declared to have been absolutely worthless.

2. Fidelity to his new calling ; his temptations

After making his profession the young religious was set by his Erfurt superiors to study theology, which was taught privately in the monastery.

The theological fare served up by the teachers of the Order was not very inviting, consisting as it largely did of the mere verbalism of a Scholasticism in decay. With the exception of the Sentences of Peter Lombard, the students at the Erfurt monastery did not study the theological works of the

great masters of the thirteenth century; neither Thomas of Aquin, the prince of scholastic theology and philosophy, nor his true successors, not even Ægidius Romanus, himself a Hermit of St. Augustine, were well known to them. The whole of their time at Erfurt, as elsewhere also, was devoted to the study of the last of the schoolmen who, indeed, stood nearer in point of time, but who were far from teaching the true doctrine with the fulness and richness of the earlier doctors. They were too much given to speculation and logical word-play. The older schoolmen were no longer appreciated and nominalistic errors, such as were fostered in the school of William of Occam, held the field. One of the better schoolmen of the day was Gabriel Biel. His works, which have a certain value, together with some of the writings of the Fathers of the Church, formed the principal arsenal from which Luther drew his theological knowledge, and upon which he exercised his dialectics. In addition to this, he also studied the theological tractates of John Gerson and Cardinal Peter d'Ailly, works which, apart from other theological defects, contain various errors concerning the authority of the Church and her Head; that these particular errors had any deeper influence on the direction of Luther's mind cannot, however, be proved. What we do find is that the one-sidedness of this school, with its tendency to hair-splitting, had a negative effect upon him. At an early date he was repelled by the scholastic subtleties, for which, according to him, Aristotle alone was responsible, and preferred to turn to the reading and study of the Bible. He nevertheless made the prevalent school methods so much his own as to apply them often, in a quite surprising fashion, in his earliest sermons and writings.

The man who exercised the greatest influence on the theological study in the Erfurt monastery was the learned Augustinian, Johann Paltz, who was teaching there when Luther entered. He was a good Churchman and a fair scholar, and was also much esteemed as a preacher. By his side worked Johann Nathin, who has already been mentioned, likewise one of the respected theologians of the Order.[1] Luther's teachers, full of veneration for the Holy

[1] On Luther's teachers and studies, see Oergel, "Vom jungen Luther," p. 105 f.; for Paltz, see N. Paulus in the Innsbruck "Zeitschrift f. kath. Theologie," 23, 1899, p. 48.

Scriptures as the revealed Word of God, were not at all displeased to see their pupil having frequent recourse to the Bible, in order to seek in the well of the Divine Word instruction and enlightenment, by which to supplement the teachings of the schoolmen and the Fathers.

Luther had, moreover, already become acquainted with the Bible in the library of the Erfurt University, whilst still engaged in studying philosophy. He had, however, not prosecuted his reading of the Bible, though the same library would doubtless have supplied him with numerous well-thumbed commentaries on Holy Writ. In the monastery a copy of the Bible was given him at the beginning of his theological course. It was, as we learn from him incidentally, a Latin translation bound in red leather, and remained in his hands until he left Erfurt. The statutes of the Order enjoined on all its members "assiduous reading, devout hearing and industrious study of the Holy Scriptures."

The young monk immersed himself more and more in the study of his beloved Bible when Staupitz, the Vicar, advised him to select the same as his special subject in order to render himself a capable "*localis* and *textualis*" in the Holy Scriptures.

The Superior seems to have had even then the intention of making use later of Luther as a public professor of biblical lore. So ardently was the Vicar's advice followed by Luther that, in his preference for reading the Bible and studying its interpretation, he neglected the rest of his theological education, and his teacher Usingen was obliged to protest against his one-sided study of the sacred text. So full was Luther of the most sacred of books, that he was able (at least this is what he says later) to show the wondering brothers the exact spot in his ponderous red volume where every subject, nay even every quotation, was to be found. It was with great regret that, on leaving this community, he found himself prohibited by the Rule from taking the copy away with him. Later, as an opponent of the religious life, he states that no one but himself read the Bible in the monastery at Erfurt, whilst of his foe Carlstadt, a former University colleague, he bluntly says that he had never seen a Bible until he was promoted to the dignity of Doctor. Of course, neither assertion can be taken literally.

When the day drew nigh for him to celebrate his first Mass

as newly ordained priest, he invited not only his father but several other guests to be present at a ceremony which meant so much both to him and to his friends. Thus, in a letter of invitation to Johann Braun, Vicar in Eisenach, who had shown him much kindness and help during his early years in that town, he says that: "God had chosen him, an unworthy sinner, for the unspeakable dignity of His service at the altar," and begged his fatherly friend to come, and by his prayers to assist him "so that his sacrifice might be pleasing in the sight of God." He also expressed to him his great indebtedness to Schalbe's College at Eisenach, which he would also have gladly seen represented at the ceremony. This is the first letter of Luther's which has been preserved and with which the critical edition of his "Correspondence," now being published, commences.[1] The first Mass took place on Cantate Sunday, May 2, 1507. Luther relates later, with regard to his state of mind during the sacred ceremony, that he could hardly contain himself for excitement and fear. The words "*Te igitur clementissime Pater*," at the commencement of the Canon of the Mass, and "*Offero tibi Deo meo vivo et vero*," at the oblation, brought so vividly to his mind the Awful, Eternal Majesty, that he was hardly able to go on ("*totus stupebam et cohorrescebam*"); he would have rushed down from the altar had he not been held back; the fear of making some mistake in the ceremonies and so committing a mortal sin, so he says, quite bewildered him.[2] Yet he must have known, with regard to the ceremonies, that any unintentional infringement of them was no sin, and least of all a mortal sin, although he attributes the contrary opinion to the "Papists" after his apostasy.

His father Hans assisted at the celebration. His presence in the church and in the refectory was the first sign of his acquiescence in his son's vocation. But when the latter, during dinner, praised the religious calling and the monastic life as something high and great,[3] and went on to recall the vow he had made at the time of the thunderstorm,

[1] April 22, 1507, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 1.

[2] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 6, p 158. (Cp. "Colloq." ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 169: "*ita horrui, ut fugissem de altari*," etc.) Also Mathesius, "Tischreden," p. 405.

[3] "Lutheri Opp. Lat. var.," 6, p. 239; "Werke," Weim. ed. 8 p. 574.

asserting that he had been called by " terrors from Heaven " (" *de cœlo terrores* "), this was too much for his level-headed father, who, to the astonishment of the guests, sharply interposed with the words : " Oh, that it may not have been a delusion and a diabolical vision." He could not overcome his dislike for his son's resolve. " I sit here and eat and drink," he cried, " and would much rather be far away." Luther retorted he had better be content, and that " to be a monk was a peaceful and heavenly life."[1] The statement with regard to the elder Luther agrees with the character of the man and with the severity which he had displayed long before to Martin.

Here an assertion must be mentioned made by George Wicel, a well-informed contemporary; once a Lutheran, he was, from 1533–8, Catholic priest at Eisleben. Two or three times he repeats in print, that Hans Luther had once slain a man in a fit of anger at his home at Möhra. Luther and his friends never denied this public statement. In recent years attempts have been made to support the same by local tradition, and the fact of the father changing his abode from Möhra to Mansfeld has thus been accounted for.[2] According to Karl Seidemann, an expert on Luther (1859), the testimony of Wicel may be taken as settling definitively the constantly recurring dispute on the subject.[3]

The following facts which have been handed down throw some light on the inward state of the young man at this time and shortly after.

At a procession of the Blessed Sacrament he had to accompany Staupitz, the Vicar, as his deacon. Such was the terror which suddenly seized him that he almost fled. On speaking afterwards of this to his superior, who was also his friend, he received the following instructive reply : " This fear is not from Christ ; Christ does not affright, He comforts."[4]

One day that Luther was present at High Mass in the monks' choir, he had a fit during the Gospel, which, as it

[1] From Bavarus's Collection of Table-Talk ; the information is received from a sermon of Luther's preached in 1544. Oertel, " Vom jungen Luther," p. 93.

[2] F. Falk, " Alte Zeugnisse über Luthers Vater und Mutter und die Möhraer," in " Histor-polit. Blätter," 120, 1897, pp. 415–25.

[3] " Lutherbriefe," Dresden, 1859, p. 11, n.

[4] " Colloq.," ed. Bindseil, 2, p. 292. " Tischreden," ed. Förstemann, 2, p. 164.

happened, told the story of the man possessed. He fell to the ground and in his paroxysms behaved like one mad. At the same time he cried out, as his brother monks affirmed: "It is not I, it is not I," meaning that he was not the man possessed.[1] It might seem to have been an epileptic fit, but there is no other instance of Luther having such attacks, though he did suffer from ordinary fits of fainting. Strange to say, some of his companions in the monastery had an idea that he had dealings with the devil, while others, mainly on account of the above-mentioned attack, actually declared him an epileptic. We learn both these facts from his opponent and contemporary, Johann Cochlæus, who was on good terms with Luther's former associates. He asserts positively that a "certain singularity of manner" had been remarked upon by his fellows in the monastery.[2] Later on his brother monk, Johann Nathin, went so far as to assert that "an apostate spirit had mastered him," i.e. that he stood under the influence of the devil.[3]

Melanchthon was afterwards to hear from Luther's own lips something of the dark states of terror from which he had suffered since his youth. When he speaks of them at the commencement of his biographical eulogy on his late friend[4] he connects Luther's strange excitement in the days before his entrance into religion with a certain event in his later history at a time when he was engaged in public controversy. "As he himself related, and as many are aware," says Melanchthon, "when considering attentively examples of God's anger, or any notable accounts of His punishments, such terror possessed him ('*tanti terrores concutiebant*') as almost to cause him to give up the ghost." He describes how, as a full-grown man, when such fears overcame him, he would actually writhe on his bed. He suffered from these terrors (*terrores*) either for the first time, or most severely, in the year in which he lost his friend by death in an accident, i.e. before his admission to the monastery. "It was not poverty," Melanchthon continues, "but his love of piety

[1] Dungersheim, "Erzeigung der Falschheit des unchristlichen lutherischen Comments usw.," in "Aliqua opuscula," p. 15, cited above on p. 4.

[2] Joh. Cochlæus, "Commentaria de actis et scriptis M. Lutheri," Mogunt., 1549, p. 1.

[3] Dungersheim, *ut supra*.

[4] "Vita Lutheri," p. 5 (see above, p. 10, n. 3.).

which led him to choose the religious life, and, while pursuing his theological and scholastic studies, he drank with glowing fervour from the springs of heavenly doctrine, namely, the writings of the prophets and apostles (i.e. the Old and New Testament) in order to instruct his spirit in the Divine Will and to nourish fear and love with strong testimony. Overwhelmed with these pains and terrors ('*dolores et pavores*'), he plunged only the more zealously into the study of the Bible."

According to Melanchthon's account, the same old Augustinian who once had directed Luther's attention in an attack of faint-heartedness to the Christian's duty of recalling the article of the forgiveness of sins, also quoted him a saying of St. Bernard: "Only believe that thy sins are forgiven thee through Christ. That is the testimony which the Holy Ghost gives in thy heart: 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Such is the teaching of the apostle, that man is justified by faith."[1]

Such words of Catholic faith and joyful trust in God might well have sufficed to reassure an obedient and humble spirit. Luther began to read more and more the mystic writings of the saint of Clairvaux, but as to how far they served to bring him peace of conscience no one can now say; certain it is that, at a later date, he placed a foreign interpretation upon the above-mentioned text and upon many other similar sayings of St. Bernard, which, taken in a Catholic sense, might have been of comfort to him, in order to render them favourable to the methods by which he proposed to make his new teaching a source of consolation. He accustomed himself more and more to follow "his own way," as he calls it, in mind and sentiment. Though in later times he speaks often and at length of his spiritual trials in the monastery, we never hear of his humbling himself before God with childlike, trustful prayer in order to find a way out of his difficulties.

If we consider the temptations of which he speaks, we might be tempted to think that he, with his promising disposition and proneness to extremes, had been singled out in a quite special manner by the tempter. During the term of novitiate, writes Luther when more advanced in years, the evil spirit of darkness, so he has learned, does not

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 71.

usually assail so bitterly the monk who is striving after perfection. Satan generally tempts him but slightly, and, more especially as regards temptations of the flesh, the novice is left in comparative peace, "indeed, nothing appears to him more agreeable than chastity."[1] But, after that time, so he tells us, he himself had to bewail not only fears and doubts, but also numberless temptations which "his age brought along with it."[2] He felt himself at the same time troubled with doubts as to his vocation and by "violent movements of hatred, envy, quarrelsomeness and pride."[3]

"I was unable to rid myself of the weight; horrible and terrifying thoughts ('*horrendæ et terrificæ cogitationes*'), stormed in upon me."[4] Temptations to despair of his salvation and to blaspheme God tormented him more especially.

He had often wondered, he says on one occasion to his father Hans, whether he was the only man whom the devil thus attacked and persecuted,[5] and later he comforted one who was in great anxiety with the words: "When beset with the greatest temptations I could scarcely retain my bodily powers, hardly keep my breath, and no one was able to comfort me. All those to whom I complained answered 'I know nothing about it,' so that I used to sigh 'Is it I alone who am plagued with the spirit of sorrow!'"[6]

He thinks that he learned the nature of these temptations from the Psalms, and that he had by experience made close acquaintance with the verse of the Bible: "Every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears" (Ps. vi. 7). Satan with his temptations was the murderer of mankind; but, notwithstanding, one must not despair. Luther here speaks of visions granted him, and of angels who after ten years brought him consolation in his solitude; these statements we shall examine later.

Elsewhere he again recounts how Staupitz encouraged him and the manner in which he interpreted his advice reveals a singular self-esteem. Staupitz had pointed out to him the interior trials endured by holy men, who had been purified by temptation, and, after having been humbled,

[1] "Opp. Lat. var.," 6, p. 364; "Werke," Weim. ed., 8, p. 660.
[2] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," p. 19, 100.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] To Hier. Weller (July ?), 1530, "Briefwechsel," 8, p. 160.
[5] "Opp. Lat. var.," 6, pp. 240; "Werke," Weim. ed., 8, p. 574.
[6] "Coll.," ed. Bindseil, 2, p. 295, on Hieronymus Weller.

had risen to be powerful instruments in God's hand. Perhaps, said Staupitz, God has great designs also for you, for the greater good of His Church. This well-meant encouragement remained vividly impressed upon Luther's memory, not least because it seemed to predict a great future for him. "And so it has actually come to pass," he himself says later, "I have become a great doctor though in the time of my temptations I could never have believed it."[1] Speaking later of a reference made by Staupitz to the temptations which humbled St. Paul, he says: "I accepted the words which St. Paul uses: 'A sting of my flesh was given me lest the greatness of the revelation should exalt me' (2 Cor. xii. 7), wherefore I receive it as the word and voice of the Holy Spirit." Such reflections as these, to which Luther gave himself up, certainly did not tend to help him to rid himself completely of the temptations, and to vanquish his melancholy thoughts of predestination. As a result of following "his own way" and cultivating his morbid fears, he never succeeded in shaking himself free from the thought of predestination. This will appear quite clearly in his recently published Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, written in 1515–16. In fact, the whole of the theology which he set up against that of the Catholic Church was in some sense dominated by his ideas on predestination.

We must, however, pay him this tribute, that during the whole of his stay in the Erfurt monastery he strove to live as a true monk and to keep the Rule. Such was the testimony borne by an old brother monk, as Flacius Illyricus relates, who had lived with him at Erfurt and who always remained true to the Church.

Though such may well have been the case, we cannot all the same accept as reliable the accounts, exaggerated and distorted as they clearly are, which, long after his falling away, he gives of his extraordinary holiness when in the monastery. He there attributes to himself, from controversial motives, a piety far above the ordinary, and speaks of the tremendous labours and penances which he imposed upon himself in his blindness. Led away by his imagination and by party animus, he exalts his one-time "holiness by works," as he terms it, to be the better able to assure his hearers —ostensibly from his own experience and from the bitter

[1] To Hier. Weller, see p. 19, n. 4.

disappointment he says he underwent—that all works of the Papists, even those of the most pious, holy and mortified, were absolutely worthless for procuring true peace for the soul thirsting after salvation, and that the Catholic Church was quite unable by her teaching to reconcile a soul with God. History merely tells us that he was an observant monk who kept the Rule, and, for that reason, enjoyed the confidence of his superiors.[1]

Relying upon his ability and his achievements, Staupitz, the Vicar, summoned him in the autumn of 1508, to Wittenberg, in order that he might there continue his studies and at the same time commence his work as a teacher on a humble scale.

As Master of Philosophy Luther gave lectures on the Ethics of Aristotle and probably also on Dialectics, though, as he himself says, he would have preferred to mount the chair of Theology, for which he already esteemed himself fitted, and which, with its higher tasks, attracted him much more than philosophy. In March, 1509, he was already the recipient of a theological degree and entered the Faculty as a "Baccalaureus Biblicus." This authorised him to deliver lectures on the Holy Scriptures at the University.

In the same year, however, probably in the late autumn, Luther's career at Wittenberg was interrupted for a time by his being sent back to Erfurt. With regard to the reasons for this nothing is known with certainty, but a movement which was going forward in the Congregation may have been the cause. In the question of the stricter observance which had recently been raised among the Augustinians, and which will be treated of below, Luther had not sided with the Wittenberg monastery but with his older friends at Erfurt. He was opposed to certain administrative regulations promoted by Staupitz, which, in the opinion of many, threatened the future discipline of the Order. At any rate, he had to return to Erfurt just as he was about to become "Sententiarius," i.e. to be promoted to the office of lecturing on the "Magister Sententiarium." For these lectures, too, he had already qualified himself. His second stay at Erfurt and the part—so important for the understanding of his later life—which he played in the disputes of the Order,

[1] See below, volume vi., cap. xxxvii., where these questions are treated more fully.

are new data in his history which have as yet received little attention.

He was made very welcome by his brothers at Erfurt, at once took up his work as "Sententiarius" and, for about a year and a half, held forth on that celebrated textbook of theology, the Book of Sentences.

He was also employed in important business for the monastery and accompanied Dr. Nathin on a mission in connection with the question of the statutes of the Congregation and the above-mentioned dispute. Both went to Halle to Adolf of Anhalt, Provost of Magdeburg Cathedral, for the purpose of defending the "observance in the vicariate." The monk made an excellent impression on the Provost of the Cathedral.[1] The esteem which Luther enjoyed while he was at Erfurt exposes the futility of those old fables, once widely circulated and generally believed, that whilst there he had entered into a liaison with a girl and had declared that he intended to go as far as he could until the times permitted of his marrying in due form.[2]

Of Luther's lectures at that time some traces are to be found in a book in the Ratsschul-Library at Zwickau, these being the oldest specimens of his handwriting which we possess. They were made public in 1893 in volume ix. of the "Kritische Gesamtausgabe" of Luther's works now appearing, and consist of detailed marginal notes to the Sentences of the Lombard of which the book in question is a printed copy.[3] The notes consist chiefly of subtle dialectic explanations or corrections of Peter Lombard and are quite in the theological style of the day. The vanity and audacity of the language used is frequently surprising; for instance, when the young master takes upon himself to speak of the "buffoonery" of contemporary theologians and philosophers, or of an ostensibly "almost heretical opinion" which he discovers in Venerable Duns Scotus; still more is this the case when he expresses his dislike of the traditional scholastic speculation and logic, alluding to the "rancid rules of the logicians," to "those grubs, the philosophers," to the "dregs of philosophy" and to that "putrid philosopher Aristotle."

[1] The reference in Dungersheim, "Dadelung," p. 14 (see above, p. 4, n. 3) has been discussed by N. Paulus in the "Histor. Jahrbuch," 1903, p. 73.

[2] See volume iii., chapter xvii., 6.

[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 9, pp. 28–94

It is worthy of note in connection with his mental growth that, on the very cover of the book, he, most independently, declares war on the "Sophists," though we do not mean to imply that such a war was not justifiable from many points of view. As a torch, however, for the illuminating of theological truth he is not unwilling to use philosophy. Very strong, nay emphatic, is his appeal to the Word of God on a trivial and purely speculative question relating to the inner life of the Trinity. He says: "Though many highly esteemed teachers assert this, yet the fact remains that on their side they have not Holy Scripture, but merely human reasons: but I say that on my side I have the Written Word that the soul is the image of God, and therefore I say with the Apostle 'Though an angel from Heaven, i.e. a Doctor of the Church, preach to you otherwise, let him be anathema.'"

In these glosses we may, however, seek in vain for any trace, even the faintest, of Luther's future teaching. The young theologian still maintains the Church's standpoint, particularly with regard to the doctrines which he was afterwards to call into question.

He still speaks correctly of "faith which works through charity and by which we are justified." Equally blameless are his statements regarding concupiscence in fallen man and the exercise of free will in the choice of good under the influence of Divine Grace. Once, it is true, he casually speaks of Christ as "our righteousness and sanctification," but, in spite of the weight which has been laid on this expression, it is in no wise remarkable, and merely voices the Catholic view of St. Augustine, or better still, of St. Paul. To Romans i. 16 f., to which he was later to attach so much importance in his new system, he refers once, interpreting it correctly and agreeably with the *Glossa ordinaria*; clearly enough it had not yet begun to interest him and his harmless words afford no proof of the statement which has been made, that already at the time he wrote "the birth-hour of the reformation had rung."

That Luther also studied at that time some of the writings of St. Augustine we see from three old volumes of the works of this Father in the Zwickau Library, which contain notes made in Luther's handwriting on the *De Trinitate*, on the *De Civitate Dei*, and other similar writings. These notes, made about the same time, are correct in their doctrine.

According to Melanchthon, already at Erfurt he had begun a "very thorough study" of the African Father of the Church.

In the latter notes, which were also published in the Weimar edition of Luther's works,[1] he once flies into a violent fit of indignation with the celebrated Wimpfeling, who was mixed up in a literary dispute with the Augustinian Order. He calls the worthy man "a garrulous barker and an envious critic of the fame of the Augustinians, who had lost his reason through obstinacy and hate, and who requires a cut of the knife to open his mole's eyes": he, "with his brazen front, should be ashamed of himself."[2] Glibness of tongue, combined with intelligence and fancy, and, in addition to unusual talents, great perseverance in study, these were the qualities which many admired in the new teacher. Whoever had to dispute with so sharp and fiery an opponent, was sure to get the worst of the encounter. The fame of the new teacher soon spread throughout the Augustinian province, but his originality and want of restraint naturally raised him up some enemies.

Alongside of his readiness in controversy which some admired, many remarked in him quarrelsomeness and disputatiousness. He never learnt how to live "at peace" with his brothers,[3] as some of the old monks afterwards told the Humanist Cochlæus. His Catholic pupil Johann Oldecop, says of his leaving Erfurt for Wittenberg, that the separation was not altogether displeasing to the Augustinians of Erfurt, because Luther was always desirous of coming off victor in differences of opinion, and liked to stir up strife.[4] Hieronymus Dungersheim, a subsequent Catholic opponent who watched him very narrowly, writes that he "had always been a quarrelsome man in his ways and habits," and that he had acquired that reputation even before ever he came to the monastery.[5] Dungersheim questioned those who had known him as a secular student at Erfurt. The above statements come, it is true, from the

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 2–14. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[3] "*Audivi crebrius, nunquam satis pacifice vixisse eum.*" So Cochlæus (see above, p. 17, n. 2) in 1524.

[4] J. Oldecop, "Chronik," ed. K. Euling, 1891, p. 17.

[5] Dungersheim, "Wore Widerlegung des falschen Buchleins M. Lutheri von beyder Gestald des hochwürdigsten Sacraments" (see above, p. 4, n. 3), p. 31′.

camp of his adversaries, but they are not only uncontradicted by any further testimony, but entirely agree with other data regarding his character.

Luther, in his own account of himself which he gave later, tells us that he was then and during the first part of his career as a monk, so full of zeal for the truth handed down by the Church that he would have given over to death any denier of the same, and have been ready to carry the wood for burning him at the stake. He also says in his queer, exaggerated fashion, that in those days he worshipped the Pope. At the same time he announces that his study of the Bible at Erfurt had already shown him many errors in the Papist Church, but that he had sought to soothe his conscience with the question: "Art thou the only wise man?" though by so doing he had retarded his understanding of the Holy Scriptures.[1] He also asserts later that his father's words spoken at the banquet which followed his first Mass, viz. that his religious vocation was probably a delusion, had pierced ever deeper into his mind and appeared to him more and more true. Yet he likewise tells us elsewhere of his persevering zeal in his profession, and of his excessive fastings and disciplines.

It is hard to find the real clue in this tangle of later statements, all of them influenced by polemical considerations.

He says quite seriously, and this may very well be true, that what he was wont to hear at times outside the monastery from unbelieving "grammarians," i.e. humanists, regarding the great difference between the teaching of Holy Scripture and that of the existing Church, made a deep impression on him.[2] He had, however, calmed himself, so he says, with the thought that this was other people's business. In the monastic library he once came across some sermons of John Hus. Their contents appeared to him excellent, nevertheless, so he writes, from aversion for the author's name, he laid aside the book without reading any further, though not without surprise that such a man should have written in many ways so well and so correctly. Johann Grefenstein, his master at Erfurt, had once let fall the

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 77.

[2] Ericeus, "Sylvula sententiarum," p. 142. Cp. J. K. Seidemann, "Luthers älteste Vorlesungen über die Psalmen," 1, Dresden, 1876, p. xvii. "*Ego adolescens audivi doctos viros et bonos grammaticos*," etc.

remark in his presence that Hus had been put to death without any previous attempt being made to instruct or convert him.

At that time, Hus failed to make any impression on him. Doubts, however, assaulted him in the shape of temptations. Those he repulsed, well aware of the danger. In June, 1521, writing at the Wartburg, he says that more than ten years before, much that was taught by Popes, Councils and Universities had appeared to him absurd and in contradiction with Christ, but that he had put a bridle on his thoughts in accordance with the Proverb of Solomon: "Lean not upon thy own prudence."[1] Certain it is that his clear mind must early have perceived that the Church of that day fell far short of the ideal, and it is possible that even in those early years, such a perception may have awakened in him doubts and discontent and have led him to take a too gloomy view of the state of the Church.

In any case, Luther's own testimony as given above leads us to suspect the presence in his mind at an early date of a deep-seated dissatisfaction which foreboded ill to the monk's future fidelity to the Church.[2]

A strong moral foundation would have been necessary to save a mind so singularly constituted from wavering, and if we may believe the statement of his contemporary, Hieronymus Dungersheim of Leipzig, this was just what Luther had always lacked. Dungersheim, in a pamphlet against Luther the heretic, harks back to the years he spent at Erfurt as a secular student and accuses him of evil habits, probably contracted then, but the after effects of which made themselves felt when he had entered into religion and caused him to rebel against his profession. If Luther, so he says, was now persuaded that no religious could keep the vow of chastity, in his case the inability could only be due to a certain "former bad habit," of which stories were told, and to his neglect of prayer.[3] In another writing the same

[1] In the tract "Rationis Latomianæ confutatio," "Opp. Lat. var.," 5, p. 400; Weim. ed., 8, p. 45.

[2] The above description of Luther's life in the monastery, starting from the strange circumstances of his entrance, has intentionally been left incomplete. Below, in volume vi., chapter xxxvii., the whole development of his character and disposition as it appears more clearly in the course of his history, and at the same time his own later views and his manner of depicting his life in religion, are reverted to in detail.

[3] "Erzeigung der Falschheit," p. 6.

opponent accuses him openly of having indulged in the grossest vice during his academic years, and mentions as his informant one of the comrades who had, later on, accompanied Luther to the gates of the monastery.[1] He says nothing, perhaps, indeed, he knew nothing more definite, and with regard to Luther's life in religion, he is unable to adduce anything to his discredit.

But yet another of Luther's later adversaries has strong words for our hero's early life. His testimony, which has not so far been dealt with, must be treated of here because such charges, if well founded, doubtless contribute much to the psychological explanation of the processes going forward in Luther. This testimony is given by Hieronymus Emser of Dresden, who, it is true, was himself by no means spotless, and who, on that account, was roundly reprimanded by the man he had attacked. In his rejoinder to Luther, a pamphlet published in 1520, and the only one preserved, he says: "Was it necessary on account of my letter that you should hold up to public execration my former deviations which are indeed, for the most part, mere inventions? What do you think has come to my ears concerning your own criminal deeds ('*flagitia*')?" He will be silent about them, he says, because he does not wish to return evil for evil, but he continues: "That you also fell, I must attribute to the same cause which brought about my own fall, namely, the want of public discipline in our days, so that young men live as they please without fear of punishment and do just what they like."[2] We must remember that at Erfurt Emser and Luther had stood in the relation of teacher and disciple. His words, like those of Dungersheim written from Leipzig, voice the opinion on Luther later on current in the hostile University circles of Erfurt.

When Luther in his later years speaks of the "sins of his youth," this, in his grotesquely anti-catholic vocabulary, means the good works of his monastic life, even the celebration of Holy Mass. Elsewhere, however, at the end of his tract on the Last Supper (1528),[3] and once in the Table-Talk,[4]

[1] "Dadelung des Bekenntnus," p. 15′, 16.

[2] "A venatione Luteriana Ægocerotis assertio," s.l.e.a., E 5′.

[3] "Werke," Erl. ed., 30, p. 372: "Although I have been a great, grievous, shameful sinner and have wasted and spent my youth damnably," yet his greatest sins were that he had been a monk and had said Mass. [4] "Tischreden" (Veit Dietrich), Weim. ed., 1, p. 61.

speaking of the sins of his youth, he distinguishes between the Catholic works above referred to and other faults of which he accuses himself in the same general terms.

In the young Augustinian's Erfurt days he was prevented by the Rule from cultivating any intimate and distracting friendship with persons in the world. We only know that he, and likewise his brother monk Johann Lang, had some friendly intercourse with the Humanist Petreius (Peter Eberbach), who not long after, in a letter dated May 8, 1512, greets Lang—then already with Luther at Wittenberg—in these words: "*Sancte Lange et Sancte Martine orate pro me.*" Mutianus, the Gotha canon and chief of the Humanists, who was very unorthodox in his views, in a letter to Lang of the beginning of May, 1515, seems to remember Luther, for he sends greetings to the "pious Dr. Martin."

His intercourse with the Humanists led Luther to make use of philology in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. He thus entered upon a useful, we may even say indispensable, course, in which he might have done great service. At Erfurt he continued constantly to study his copy of the Bible, which had become an inseparable companion. "As no one in the monastery read the Bible" (at any rate not with his zeal) he was able to flatter himself with being first in the house in the matter of biblical knowledge; indeed in this field he was probably the greatest expert in the whole Congregation.

In addition to this, he began to turn his busy mind to the study of Hebrew, and contrived to provide himself with a dictionary, which at that time was considered a treasure. Lang, with his humanistic culture, was able to assist him with the Greek.

Meanwhile the dispute in the Order with regard to the observance had reached a point when it seemed right to the party to which Luther belonged to seek the intervention of Rome in their favour, or to anticipate an appeal on the part of their opponents. The choice of seven houses "of the observance" resulted in Luther being chosen as the delegate to represent them in Rome. So little opposed to the Church was Luther's theology and Bible interpretation in his Erfurt days, and so considerable was the number of brethren, even in other Observantine houses who held him

to be a faithful monk, that they deemed him best suited for so difficult a mission. What Cochlæus, according to information drawn from Augustinian sources, relates later sounds, however, quite reasonable, viz. that he was selected on account of his "cleverness and his forceful spirit of contradiction," which promised a complete victory over the other faction.[1]

Luther's journey to Rome, according to Oldecop, was undertaken from Erfurt.

3. The Journey to Rome

The Saxon, or more correctly German, Congregation of Augustinians, at the time of Luther's journey to Rome, had reached a crisis in its history.

Founded on the old Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, by the pious and zealous Andreas Proles (1503), and provided by him with excellent statutes intended to promote a reform of discipline, the Congregation had, since its foundation, been withdrawn from the control of the Provincial of the unreformed Augustinian Province of Saxony in order the better to preserve its stricter observance.[2] It stood directly under the General of the Order at Rome, whose German representative was a Vicar-General—in Luther's time, Staupitz. He was simply styled Vicar, or sometimes Provincial. The monasteries under him numbered about thirty, and were distributed throughout several so-called districts, each headed by a Rural Vicar.

Staupitz's aim was to bring about a reunion of the German Congregation with the numerous non-observant monasteries in Germany, an amalgamation which would probably have led indirectly to his becoming the head of all these communities. He had already (Sept. 30, 1510) published a document of Carvajal the Papal Legate approving such a union, and, by virtue of the same, begun to style himself Provincial of Thuringia and Saxony. His efforts were, however, met by decided opposition within the Congregation. Certain houses which were in favour of the old state of things and feared that union would lead to a relaxation of discipline, vehemently opposed Staupitz and his plans. To

[1] "Commentaria," etc., p. 1. "*Acer ingenio et ad contradicendum audax et vehemens.*"

[2] Kolde, "Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation," p. 96 f.

this party belonged also the Erfurt monastery, and Luther himself took an active part in the position assumed by his house. The object of his visit to Halle with Dr. Nathin to see Prince Adolf of Anhalt, the Cathedral Provost, had been to obtain a "petition" in favour of the "observance." The opposition became acute when the Bull above referred to was published by Staupitz, and we may consider the protest of the seven Observantine monasteries against the Bull as the direct cause of Luther's despatch to Rome.

The monk, then seven-and-twenty years of age, with his written authority to act as procurator in the case ("*litis procurator*" is what Cochlæus, who knew something of these matters, styles him), set out forthwith on his journey. It was in the autumn 1510,[1] and Luther was then lecturing on the third book of the Sentences. His absence lasted four or five months, i.e. until the spring 1511, when we again find him at Erfurt. Luther, and those who felt with him, found no difficulty in reconciling their efforts for the preservation of the observance against the will of Staupitz, with due submission to him as their Superior.

Another monk of the Order accompanied Luther to the capital of Christendom as the Rule enjoined in the case of journeys. The joy at such an opportunity of seeing the Eternal City, of quenching his ardent thirst for knowledge by the acquisition of new experiences and of gaining the graces attached to so holy a pilgrimage, may well have hurried his steps during the wearisome journey, which in those days had to be undertaken on foot. He had even, according to a later statement, made the resolution to cleanse his conscience—so frequently tortured by fears—by a general confession, indeed he once says that this was his main object, passing over the real reason.

With regard to the effect of the journey on the question concerning the Order, it is clear it was a failure; the dispute was finally settled only in May, 1512, at the Cologne Chapter; Staupitz was unable to carry out his plan and eventually gave it up. The dispute between

[1] For the date and cause, see N. Paulus in the "Histor. Jahrbuch," 1891, 68 f., 314 f.; 1901, 110 ff.; 1903, 72 ff. Also "Histor.-polit. Blätter," 142, 1908, 738–52. The year 1510–11, as against that given by Köstlin-Kawerau, viz. 1511–12, is now accepted by Kroker in his edition of the "Tischreden der Mathesischen Sammlung," p. 417, and by Kawerau in the "Lutherkalender," 1910, p. 97.

"Observants" and "non-Observants" thus started, as we may gather from statements made by Luther to which we refer later, far from being at an end became more and more acute. It appears to have done untold harm to the Congregation and to have largely contributed to its fall.

What effect had the visit to Italy and Rome upon the development of the young monk?

Thousands have been cheered in spirit by the visit to the tombs of the Apostles; prayer at the holy places of Rome, the immediate proximity of the Vicar of Christ and of the world-embracing government of the Church made them feel what they had never felt before, the pulse-beat of the heart of Christendom, and they returned full of enthusiasm, strengthened and inspirited, and with the desire of working for souls in accordance with the mind of the Church.

With Luther this was not the case.

He was much less impressed by the Rome of the Saints than by the corruption then rampant in ecclesiastical circles.

On first perceiving Rome from the heights of Monte Mario, he devoutly greeted the city, as all pilgrims were wont to do, overjoyed at having reached the goal of their long pilgrimage.[1] After that, he untiringly occupied himself, so far as his chief business permitted, in seeing all that Rome had to show. He assures us that he believed everything that was told him of the real or legendary reminiscences of the holy places both above and under ground. He does not, however, appear to have been very careful in his choice of guides and acquaintances, for the anecdotes concerning the condition of things at Rome which he brought back with him to his own country were, if not untrue, at least exceedingly spiteful. The Augustinians whom he there met had not the spirit of the reform inaugurated by Proles. Their southern freedom and lack of restraint found all too strong an echo in Luther's character. The general confession he had projected was probably never made,[2] for, as he asserts later, he had not found among the clergy a single suitable, worthy man. During his distracting stay in the Eternal City he said Mass, so he tells us, perhaps once, perhaps ten times, i.e. occasionally, not regularly.[3] He was greatly

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed. 62, p. 438. "Coll.," ed. Bindseil, 1, 165; "Tischreden," ed. Förstemann, 4, 687.

[2] "Coll.," ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 169, and n. 33.

[3] "Werke," Erl. ed. 40, p. 284.

scandalised at much he heard and saw, partly owing to his looking at things with the critical eye of a northerner, partly owing to the really existing moral disorders.

The Rome of that day was the Rome of Julius II, the then Pope, and of his predecessor Alexander VI; it was the Rome of the Popes of the height of the Renaissance, glorified by art, but inwardly deeply debased. The capital of Christendom, under the influence of the frivolity which had seized the occupants of the Papal throne and invaded the ranks of the higher clergy, had proved false to her dignity and forgetful of the fact that the eyes of the Faithful who visited Rome from every quarter of the globe were jealously fixed upon her in their anxiety lest the godless spirit of the world should poison the very heart of the Church.

Instead of being edified by the good which he undoubtedly encountered and by the great ideal of the Church which no shadow can ever darken, Luther, with his critically disposed mind, proved all too receptive to the contrary impressions and allowed himself to be unduly influenced by the dark side of things, i.e. the corruption of morals. Subsequently, in his public controversies and private Table-Talk, he tells quite a number of disreputable tales,[1] which, whether based on fact or not, were all too favourable to his anti-Roman tendencies. He was in the habit of saying, in his usual tone, that whoever looked about him a little in Rome, would find abominations compared to which those of Sodom were mere child's play. He declares that he heard from the mouth of Papal courtiers the statement: "It cannot go on much longer, it must break up." In the company in which he mixed he heard these words let fall: "If there be a Hell, then Rome is built over it." He says that he had heard it said of one, who expressed his grief at such a state of things, that he was a "*buon cristiano*," which meant much the same as a good-natured simpleton. In his proneness to accept evil tales he believed, at least so he asserts later, the statement made in his presence, that many priests were in the habit of repeating jokes at Mass in place of the words of consecration. He relates that he even questioned whether the bishops and priests at Rome, the prelates of the Curia, aye, the Pope himself, had any Christian belief

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, I, p. 99 f.

left. It is not worth while to go into the details of the scandals he records, because, as Hausrath justly remarks, "it is questionable how much weight is due to statements which, in part, date from the later years of his life, when he had so completely altered."[1]

In his accounts the share which he himself actually took in the pious pilgrim-exercises of the time is kept very much in the background.

He came to the so-called Scala Santa at the Lateran, and saw the Faithful, from motives of penance, ascending the holy steps on their knees. He turned away from this touching popular veneration of the sufferings of the Redeemer, and preferred not to follow the example of the other pilgrims.[2] An account given by his son Paul in 1582 says that he then quoted the Bible verse: "The just man liveth by faith." If it be a fact that he made use of these words which were to assume so great importance and to be so sadly misinterpreted in his subsequent theology, it was certainly not in their later sense. In reality we have here in all probability an instance of a later opinion being gratuitously anticipated, for Luther himself declares that he discovered his gospel only after he had taken his Doctor's degree, and this we shall show abundantly further on. Older Protestant writers have frequently represented the scene at the steps of the Lateran in unhistorical colours owing to their desire to furnish a graphic historical beginning of the change in Luther's mind. Mylius of Jena was one of the first to do this.[3] Mylius, in 1595, quite falsely asserts that Luther had already commented on the Epistle to the Romans previous to his journey to Rome, and adds that he had already then noted the later interpretation of the Bible text in question. It is true that his son Paul, where he speaks of Luther's exclamation as having been communicated to him by his father, expressly states that "he had *then*, through the spirit of Jesus, come to the knowledge of the truth of the holy gospel." But Köstlin's Biography of Luther rightly denies this, and describes it as an "exaggeration"[4]—"error" would have been better—for the

[1] "Luthers Romfahrt," p. 79. [2] See, however, vol. vi., xlii, 2.
[3] Georgius Mylius, "In Epistolam divi Pauli ad Romanos," etc., Ienæ, 1595. "Præfatio," fol. 2′. Cp. Theod. Elze, "Luthers Reise nach Rom," Berlin, 1899, pp. 3, 45, 80.
[4] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 749 f.

assumption to which Luther's friends still cling with such affection, namely, that from the very commencement of his journey to Rome he had been "haunted by the Bible text concerning justification by faith," at a time "when he still was striving to serve God by his own works," must be struck out of history as a mere fiction.[1]

At Rome Luther's conviction of the authority of the Holy See was in no wise shaken, in spite of what some people have thought. All the scandals had not been able to achieve this. As late as 1516 he was still preaching in entire accordance with the traditional doctrine of the Church on the power of the Papacy, and it is worth while to quote his words in order to show the Catholic thoughts which engaged him while wandering through the streets of Rome. "If Christ had not entrusted all power to one man, the Church would not have been perfect because there would have been no order and each one would have been able to say he was led by the Holy Spirit. This is what the heretics did, each one setting up his own principle. In this way as many Churches arose as there were heads. Christ therefore wills, in order that all may be assembled in one unity, that His Power be exercised by one man to whom also He commits it. He has, however, made this Power so strong that He looses all the powers of Hell (without injury) against it. He says: 'The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it,' as though He said: 'They will fight against it but never overcome it,' so that in this way it is made manifest that this power is in reality from God and not from man. Wherefore whoever breaks away from this unity and order of the Power, let him not boast of great enlightenment and wonderful works, as our Picards and other heretics do, 'for much better is obedience than the victims of fools who know not

[1] On his own account Paul was only a boy of eleven when he heard this statement from his father; it is therefore very doubtful whether he understood and remembered it correctly. Luther would surely have returned to the subject more frequently had it really played so great a part in his development, especially as he speaks so often of his journey to Rome. O. Scheel in his recent thesis on the development of Luther down to the time of the conclusion of the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans ("Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgesch, Nr. 100, Jubiläumsschrift," 1910, pp. 61-230), quite correctly says: "It is possible that his son, knowing of what importance Romans i. 17 had become for Luther, may at a later date have combined these words with the Roman incident." In any case, the objections with regard to this incident are so great that little can be made out of it.

what evil they do' (Eccles. iv. 17)."[1] That, when in Rome, he was still full of reverence for the Pope, Luther shows in his Table-Talk, though his language on this occasion can only be described as filthy.[2]

His ideas with regard to the Church's means of Grace, the Mass, Indulgences and Prayer had not, at the time of his return to Germany, undergone any theoretical change, though it is highly probable that his practical observance of the Church's law suffered considerably. The fact is, his character was not yet sufficiently formed when he started on his journey; he was, as Oldecop says, "a wild young fellow."[3]

Luther later on relates it as a joke, that, when at Rome, he had been so zealous in gaining Indulgences that he had wished his parents were already dead so that he might apply to their souls the great Indulgences obtainable there.[4] Of the Masses which he celebrated in the Holy City he assures us—again more by way of a joke than as an exact statement of fact—that he said them so piously and slowly that three, or even six, Italian priests or monks had finished all their Masses in succession before he had come to the end of one. He even declares that in Rome Mass is said so rapidly that ten, one after another, occupied only one hour, and that he himself had been urged on with the cry: "Hurry up, Brother, hurry up." Whoever is familiar with the older Luther's manner of speech, will be on his guard against taking such jests seriously or as proof of scrupulosity; he is, in reality, merely laying stress on the blatant contrast between his own habit and the precipitation of the Italians.

In 1519, i.e. not yet ten years after Luther's visit, his pupil Oldecop came to Rome and set to work to make diligent enquiries concerning the stay there of his already famous master, with whose teaching, however, he did not agree. As he says in his "Chronik," published not long since, he learned that Luther had taken lessons in Hebrew from a Jew called Jakob, who gave himself out to be a physician. He sought out the Jew, probably a German, and heard from him that "Martinus had begged the Pope

[1] Sermo in Vincula S. Petri, hence on August 1. "Werke," Weim. ed., 1 (1883), p. 69.
[2] "Tischreden," ed. Förstemann, 4, p. 687.
[3] "Chronik," p. 30.
[4] "Werke," Erl. ed., 40, p. 284.

to be allowed to study in Italy for ten years in secular dress," but that, owing to the absence of any authorisation from his Superiors, his request had been refused, and Martinus, instead of being privileged to dress as a secular priest, had been obliged to retain his "cowl," i.e. the habit of his Order. Oldecop then betook himself to the official who, as he learnt, had drafted the monk's petition, and who fully confirmed the Jew's statement. There is no reason for doubting these new tales,[1] notwithstanding the fact that in some of the other statements made by Oldecop, especially those in which he had no personal concern, some unintentional errors occur. According to the character given him by his editor Carl Euling, he was "an educated and honourable man, with good judgment."[2] Notice deserves to be taken of a minor detail of the incident which confirms the truth of this account, namely, that the official, affrighted at the mention of Luther's name, was at first unwilling to speak, and then begged that the fact of his having had dealings with him should not be betrayed. The man, who is here portrayed to the life, after he became more loquacious, also expressed the opinion that had Luther been allowed to take off the cowl he would never have put it on again; a view, of course, merely based on the later course of events. Luther's desire for learning was so great, and his impulsive character so marked, that it is quite possible that he cherished such a project. Nor was there anything so very singular in the plan, for about that time other monks had been secularised at their own request. In a Brief dated January 26, 1517, Erasmus, who was an Augustinian canon, received permission to wear the dress of a secular priest, a fact to which Luther, on occasion, makes allusion. As such a privilege, even though restricted as to duration, would without doubt have appealed to the freedom of thought which at that time Luther was beginning to cultivate, the fact that it was refused owing to the lack of authorisation by his German Superiors assuredly cannot have sweetened his recollection of the Roman Curia; its only effect was probably to wound his vanity. He himself never speaks of this petition; he had no cause to do so, and

[1] This remark only applies to the statement in the text. When Oldecop says he was told in Rome that Luther had come to Rome without the authorisation of his Superiors, this was untrue.

[2] Preface to Oldecop's "Chronik."

indeed it ill agreed with the legend which, with advancing years, he began to weave about his life in the monastery. On the other hand, we have probably a distorted version of the incident in an assertion, circulated later by his opponents, viz. that during his stay at Rome he had sought secularisation in order to be able to marry.[1]

Regarding the morals of the Italians and not the Romans only, he makes many unfavourable and even unfair statements in his later reminiscences of his wanderings through their country. The only things which found favour in his eyes were, in fact, their charity and benevolence as displayed in some of the hospitals, particularly in Florence, the sobriety of the people and, at Rome, the careful carrying out of ecclesiastical business. An evil breath of moral laxity was passing over the whole country, more especially, however, over the rich and opulent towns and the higher classes, infected as they were with the indifferentism of the Humanists. Those travelling alone found themselves exposed in the inns to the worst moral dangers. We must also call to mind that, in those very years the Neapolitan, or French disease, as syphilis was then called, infested a wide area of this otherwise delightful country, having been introduced by the troops who came to southern Italy. The places where strangers from other lands were obliged to spend the night on their travels were hotbeds of infection for both body and soul.

Luther returned to Germany towards the month of February, 1511, though he was no longer the same man as when he set out. He said, after his apostasy: "I, like a fool, carried onions to Italy and brought garlic (i.e. worse stuff) back with me." As a controversialist he declared that he would not take 100,000 gulden to have missed seeing Rome, as otherwise he would feel that he was doing the Papacy an injustice; he only wished that everyone who was about to become a priest would visit Rome.

[1] Cp. George, Duke of Saxony, in the pamphlet published under Arnoldi's name: "Auf das Schmähbüchlein Luthers wider den Meuchler von Dresden," 1531 ("Werke," Erl. ed., 25, p. 147), where he thus addresses Luther: "You are hostile to the Pope because, among other reasons, he would not free you from the frock and give you a whore for your wife." The mention of the frock points to a reminiscence of what actually had taken place. Possibly the Jew is the same Jakob who, in 1520, accepted Luther's doctrine in Germany and was baptised. Cp. Luther's "Briefwechsel," 4, pp. 97, 147.

A notable result of his stay in Italy was, that Luther, after his return to the monastery, immediately changed his standpoint regarding the "observance." Sent to Rome for the defence of the "observance," he now unexpectedly veered round and became its opponent. "He deserted to Staupitz" as Cochlæus puts it, evidently using the very words of the Observantines, and soon Luther was seen passionately assailing the Observantines, whose spokesman he had been shortly before. In all likelihood his changed view stood in some connection with a change in his domicile. No sooner had he returned to the Observantine monastery of Erfurt, than he left it for Wittenberg, where he was to take his degree of Doctor of Divinity and then ascend the professorial chair. Doubtless under Staupitz's influence the fulfilment of those great hopes which he had formerly cherished now arose on the horizon of his mind. To continue to withstand Staupitz in the matter of the observance could but prove a hindrance to his advance, especially as the Wittenberg community was for the most part opposed to the observance. Nothing further is, however, known with regard to this strange change of front. It was of the greatest importance for his future development, as will appear in the sequel; the history of his warfare against the Observantines, to which as yet little attention has been paid, may also be considered as a new and determining factor in his mental career.

4. The Little World of Wittenberg and the Great World in Church and State

Since the spring 1511, Luther had been qualifying, by diligent study in his cell in the great Augustinian monastery at Wittenberg, to take his degree of Doctor in Divinity in the University of that city.

In his later statements he says that he had small hopes of success in his new career on account of his weak health; that he had in vain opposed Staupitz's invitation to take his doctorate, and that he had been compelled by obedience to comply with his Superior's orders. After passing brilliantly the requisite tests, the University bestowed upon him the theological degree on October 18, 1512. Luther at once commenced his lectures on Holy Scripture, the subject

of this, his first course, being the Psalms (1513–16). His audience consisted mainly of young Augustinians, to whom a correct understanding of the Psalms was a practical need for their services in choir.

He displayed already in these early lectures, no less than in those of the later period, the whole force of his fancy and eloquence, his great ability in the choice of quotations from the Bible, his extraordinary subjectivity, and, however out of place in such a quarter, the vehemence of his passion; in our own day the sustained rhetorical tone of his lectures would scarcely appeal to the hearer.

The fiery and stimulating teacher was in his true element at Wittenberg. The animation that pervaded students and teachers, the distinction which he enjoyed amongst his friends, his unlimited influence over the numerous young men gathered there, more especially over the students of his own Order, no less than the favour of the Elector of Saxony for the University, the Order, and, subsequently, for his own person, all this, in spite of his alleged unwillingness to embrace the profession, made his stay at Wittenberg, and his work there, very agreeable to him, though he does once speak of his removal thither as a "come down" (p. 127). Wittenberg became in the sequel the citadel of his teaching. There he remained until the evening of his days as Professor of Holy Scripture, and quitted the town only when forced by urgent reasons to do so.

As with all men of great gifts, who make a deep impression on their day, but are, all the same, children of their time, so was it with Luther. In his case, however, the influence from without was all the deeper because his lively and receptive temperament lent itself to a stronger external stimulus, and also because the position of so young a man in a professorial chair in the very heart of Germany did much to foster such influences.

Martin Pollich of Mellerstadt, formerly Professor at Leipzig, a physician, a jurist and a man of humanistic tendencies who had helped Staupitz to organise the new University, enjoyed a great reputation in the Wittenberg schools. Alongside him were the theologians Amsdorf, Carlstadt, Link, Lang and Staupitz. Nicholas von Amsdorf, who was subsequently said to be "more Luther than Luther himself," had been since 1511 licentiate of theology, and

had at the same time filled, as a secular priest, the office of Canon at the Castle Church. Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt, usually known as Carlstadt, occupied a position amongst the Augustinians engaged in teaching. He had taken his degree at Wittenberg in 1510, and was at the outset a zealous representative of Scholasticism, though he speedily attached himself to Luther's new teaching. He was the first to proclaim the solubility of religious vows. Wenceslaus Link worked at the University from 1509 to about 1516, eventually succeeding Staupitz as Augustinian Vicar-General, and, later, by his marriage in 1523, gave the last Augustinians of the unfortunate Congregation the signal for forsaking the Order. Another Augustinian, Johann Lang, who had been Luther's friend since the days of his first studies at Erfurt, had come to Wittenberg about 1512 as teacher at the "Studium" of the Order, though he soon left it to return to Erfurt. Johann Staupitz, the Superior of the Congregation, resigned in 1512 his Professorship of Holy Scripture at Wittenberg, being unable to attend to it sufficiently owing to his frequent absence, and made over the post to Luther, whom, as he says in his eulogistic speech to the Elector of Saxony, he had been at pains to form into a "very special Doctor of Holy Scripture."

The teaching in the University at that time was, of course, from the religious standpoint, Catholic. Its scholarship was, however, infected with the humanistic views of the Italian naturalism, and this new school had already stamped some of the professors with its freethinking spirit.[1]

The influence of Humanism on Luther's development must be admitted, though it is frequently overrated, the subsequent open alliance of the German Humanists with the new gospel being set back, without due cause, to Luther's early days. As a student he had plunged into the study of

[1] A proof of this may, e.g., be found in certain statements on marriage made by the jurist Christoph Scheurl, borrowed from his professor Codro Urceo of Bologna, and brought forward in a speech held at Wittenberg, November 16, 1508. A Latin dialogue which the Wittenberg professor Andreas Meinhardi published in 1508 also betrays the influence of those humanistic groups. J. Haussleitner ("Die Universität Wittenberg vor dem Eintritt Luthers," 1903, pp. 46 f., 84 ff.) attributes the manner of expression and the views of both to the ecclesiasticism of the Middle Ages. Cp. on the other side N. Paulus in the "Wissenschaftl. Beilage" to "Germania," 1904, No. 10.

the ancient classics which he loved, but there was a great difference between this and the being in complete intellectual communion with the later Humanists, whose aims were in many respects opposed to the Church's. Thanks to the practical turn of his mind, the study of the classics, which he occasionally continued later, never engaged his attention or fascinated him to the extent it did certain Humanists of the Renaissance, who saw in the revival of classic Paganism the salvation of mankind. As a young professor at the University he was not, however, able to escape entirely the influence of the liberalism of the age, with its one-sided and ill-considered opposition to so many of the older elements of culture, an opposition which might easily prove as detrimental as a blind and biassed defence of the older order.

It is not necessary to demonstrate here how dangerous a spirit of change and libertinism was being imported in the books of the Italian Humanists, or by the German students who had attended their lectures.

With regard to Luther personally, we know that he not only had some connection with Mutian, the leader of a movement which at that time was still chiefly literary, but also that Johann Lang at once forwarded to Mutian a lecture against the morals of the " little Saints " of his Order delivered by Luther at Gotha in 1515.[1] Luther also excused himself in a very respectful letter to this leader of the Humanists for not having called on him when passing through Gotha in 1516.[2] Luther's most intimate friend, Lang, through whom he seems to have entered into a certain exchange of ideas with Humanism, was an enthusiastic Humanist and possessed of great literary connections. Lang, for his part, speaks highly to Mutian of the assistance rendered him in his studies by Luther.[3] There can therefore be no doubt that Luther was no stranger to the efforts of the Humanists, to their bold and incisive criticism of the traditional methods, to their new idealism and their spirit of independence. Many of the ideas which filled the air in those days had doubtless an attraction for and exerted

[1] Kolde, " Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation," p. 263 ; " Briefwechsel," 1, p. 36, n. 5.

[2] Letter of May 29, 1516, " Briefwechsel," 1, p. 35.

[3] Lang to Mutian, May 2, 1515, " Briefwechsel." 1, p. 36, n. 5.

an influence on the open-hearted, receptive disposition of the talented monk.

Luther's friendship with Spalatin, which dated from his Erfurt days, must also be taken into account in this regard. For Spalatin, who came as tutor and preacher in 1508 to the Court of the Elector of Saxony, was very closely allied in spirit with the Humanists of Erfurt and Gotha. It was he who asked Luther for his opinion respecting the famous dispute of the Cologne Faculty with the Humanist Reuchlin, a quarrel which engaged the sympathy of scholars and men of education throughout the length and breadth of Germany. Luther, in his reply, which dates from January or February, 1514, had at that time no hesitation in emphatically taking the side of Reuchlin, who, he declared, possessed his love and esteem. God, he says, would carry on His work in spite of the determined opposition of one thousand times one thousand Cologne burghers, and he adds meaningly that there were much more important matters with the Church which needed reform; they were "straining at gnats and swallowing camels."[1] The conservative attitude of the authorities at Cologne was at that time not at all to his taste. Not long after Luther writes very strongly to Spalatin, again in favour of Reuchlin, against Ortwin de Graes of Cologne, and says among other things that he had hitherto thought the latter an ass, but that he must now call him a dog, a wolf and a crocodile, in spite of his wanting to play the lion,[2] expressions which are quite characteristic of Luther's style.

On the appearance of the "Letters of Obscure Men," and a similar satirical writing which followed them, and which also found its way into Luther's hands, the young Wittenberg professor, instead of taking the field against the evil tendency of these attacks of the Humanist party on the "bigots of Scholasticism and the cloister" as such diatribes deserved, and as he in his character of monk and theologian should have done, sought to take a middle course: he approved of the purpose of the attacks, but not of the satire itself, which mended nothing and contained too much invective. Both productions, he says, must have come out of the same pot; they had as their author, if not

[1] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 14.
[2] Letter of August 5, 1514, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 20.

the same, at least a very similar comedian. It is now known that the real author of the letters which caused such an uproar was his former University friend, Crotus Rubeanus.[1]

On what terms did Luther stand with respect to Erasmus, the leader of the Humanists, before their great and final estrangement? As he speaks of Erasmus in a letter of 1517 to Lang as "our Erasmus," we may infer that until then he was, to a certain extent, favourably disposed towards him. He rejoiced on reading his humanistic writings to find that "he belaboured the monks and clergy so manfully and so learnedly and had torn the veil off their out-of-date rubbish."[2] Yet, on the same occasion, he confesses that his liking for Erasmus is becoming weaker. It was not the attitude of Erasmus to the Church in general which even then separated Luther from him, but his new teaching on Grace, the origin of which will be treated of later. It is true Luther conveyed to him through Spalatin his good wishes for his renown and progress, but in the same message he admonished him not to follow the example of nearly every commentator in interpreting certain passages where Paul condemns "righteousness by works" as referring only to the Mosaic ceremonial law, and not rather to all the works of the Decalogue. If such are performed "outside the Faith in Christ," then though they should make of a man a Fabricius, a Regulus, or a paragon of perfection, yet they have as little in common with righteousness as blackberries have with figs"; it is not the works which justify a man, but rather our righteousness which sanctifies the works. Abel was more pleasing to God than his works.[3] The exclusive sense in which Luther interprets these words, according to which he does not even admit that works of righteousness are of any value for the increase of righteousness, is a consequence of his new standpoint, to which he is anxious to convert Erasmus and all the Humanists.

He had the Humanists in his mind when he wrote as follows to Johann Lang: "The times are perilous, and a man may be a great Greek, or Hebrew [scholar] without being a wise Christian. . . . He who makes concessions to human

[1] To Johann Lang, October 5, 1516, and to Spalatin about the same time, "Briefwechsel," 1, pp. 59, 62.

[2] Letter of March 1, 1517, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 88.

[3] To Spalatin, October 19, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 64.

free-will judges differently from him who knows nothing save Grace alone."[1] But this is to forestall a development of his error, which will be described later. At the time that his new doctrine originated he was far more in sympathy with the theories of certain groups of late mediæval mystics than with the views of the Humanists, because, as will appear later, he found in them the expression of that annihilation of the human by means of Grace, of which the idea was floating before his mind, and because he also discovered in them an "inwardness" which agreed with his own feelings at that time.

From Erasmus and his compeers he undoubtedly borrowed, in addition to a spirit of justifiable criticism, an exaggerated sentiment of independence towards ecclesiastical antiquity. The contact with their humanistic views assuredly strengthened in him the modern tendency to individualism. Not long after a change in the nature of his friendship necessarily took place. His antagonism to Erasmus in the matter of his doctrine of Grace led to a bitter dispute between the two, to which Luther's contribution was his work on "The Servitude of the Will" (*De servo arbitrio*); at the same time his alliance with the Humanists remained of value to him in the subversive movement which he had inaugurated.

Mighty indeed were the forces, heralds of a spiritual upheaval, which, since the fifteenth century, had streamed through the Western world in closer or more distant connection with the great revival of the study of classical antiquity. They proclaimed the advent of a new cycle in the history of mankind. This excited world could not fail to impart its impulse to the youthful Luther.

The recently discovered art of printing had, as it were at one blow, created a world-wide community of intellectual productions and literary ideas such as the Middle Ages had never dreamed of. The nations were drawn closer together at that period by the interchange of the most varied and far-reaching discoveries. The spirit of worldly enterprise awoke as from a long slumber as a result of the astonishing discovery of great and wealthy countries overseas.

With the greater facilities for intellectual intercourse and the increase of means of study, criticism set to work on all branches of learning with greater results than ever before.

[1] Letter of March 1, 1517, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 88.

The greater States now did what they had been willing but unable to do before; they freed themselves more and more from the former tutelage of the Church; they aimed at securing freedom and shaking off that priestly influence to which, in part at least, they owed their stability and their growth; nor was this movement confined to the greater States, for, in Germany, at any rate, the wealthy cities, the great landed proprietors and princes were all alike intent on ridding themselves of the oppression under which they had hitherto laboured and on securing for themselves an increase of power. In brief, everywhere the old restraints were breaking down, everywhere a forward movement of individualism was in progress at the expense of the commonweal and the traditional order of the Middle Ages; but, above all, at the expense of the Church's religious authority, which, alone till then, had kept individualism in check to the profit of humanity.

It would indeed have been well had at least the Catholic Church at that critical period been free from weakness and abuse. Her Divine power of blessing the nations, it is true, still survived, her preaching of the truth, her treasure of the Sacraments, in short, her soul, was unchanged; but, because she was suffering from many lamentable imperfections, the disruptive forces were able to come into play with fatal results. The complaints of eloquent men full of zeal for souls, both at that time and during the preceding decades, particularly in Germany, over the decline of religious life among the Faithful and the corruption in the clergy, were only too well founded, and deserved to have met with a much more effectual reception than they did. What the monk of Wittenberg, with unbridled passion and glaring exaggeration, was about to thunder forth over the world in his mighty call for reform, had already for the most part been urged by others, yea, by great Saints of the Church who attacked the abuses with the high-minded zeal of ripe experience. Strict, earnest and experienced men had set to work on a Catholic reform in many parts of the Church, not excepting Germany, in the only profitable way, viz. not by doctrinal innovation, but by raising the standard of morality among both people and clergy. But progress was slow, very slow, for reasons which cannot be dealt with here. The life-work of the pious founder of his own Con-

gregation might well have served Luther as an admirable example of moral regeneration and efficiency; for the aim of Andreas Proles was, as a Protestant writer remarks: "A strong and mighty Reformation"; he lived in hopes that God would shortly raise up a hero capable of bringing it about with strength and determination, though the Reformation he had in his mind, as our historian allows, could only have been a Reformation in the Catholic sense.[1] Another attractive example of reforming zeal was also given under Luther's very eyes by the Windesheim Congregation of the Brethren of the Common Life, with whom he had been in friendly intercourse from his boyish days.

The disorders in Germany had an all too powerful stronghold in the higher ranks of ecclesiastical authority. Not until after the Council of Trent did it become apparent how much the breaking down of this bulwark of corruption would cost. The bishops were for the most part incapable or worldly. Abbots, provosts, wealthy canons and dignitaries vied with and even excelled the episcopate in their neglect of the duties of their clerical state. In the filling of Church offices worldly influence was paramount, and in its wake followed forced nominations, selfishness, incompetence and a general retrograde movement; the moral disorders among the clergy and the people accumulated under lazy and incompetent superiors. The system of indulgences, pilgrimages, sodalities and numerous practices connected with the veneration of the Saints, as well as many other details of worship, showed lamentable excesses.

Of the above-mentioned evils within the German Church, two will be examined more closely: the interference of the Government and the worldly-minded nobility in Church matters, and the evil ways of the higher and lower grades of the clergy.

Not merely were the clerical dues frequently seized by the princes and lesser authorities, but positions in the Cathedral chapters and episcopal sees were, in many cases, handed over arbitrarily to members of the nobility or ruling houses, so that in many places the most important posts were held by men without a vocation and utterly unworthy of the office. "When the ecclesiastical storm broke out at

[1] Kolde, "Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation," p. 163; cp. p. 96 ff. and Kolde, "Martin Luther," 1, pp. 47, 50, 59 f.

the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century the following archbishopries and bishopries were filled by the sons of princes : Bremen, Freising, Halberstadt, Hildesheim, Magdeburg, Mayence, Merseburg, Metz, Minden, Münster, Naumburg, Osnabrück, Paderborn, Passau, Ratisbon, Spires, Verden and Verdun."[1] The bishops drawn from the princely houses were, as a rule, involved in worldly business or in Court intrigues, even where, as was the case, for instance, with the powerful Archbishop of Mayence, Albrecht of Brandenburg, their early education had not been entirely anti-ecclesiastical.

Another evil was the uniting of several important bishopries in the hands of one individual. " The Archbishop of Bremen was at the same time Bishop of Verden, the Bishop of Osnabrück also Bishop of Paderborn, the Archbishop of Mayence also Archbishop of Magdeburg and Bishop of Halberstadt. George, Palsgrave of the Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, had already in his thirteenth year been made Cathedral Provost of Mayence and afterwards became a Canon of Cologne and Treves, Provost of St. Donatian's at Bruges, patron of the livings of Hochheim and Lorch on the Rhine and finally, in 1513, Bishop of Spires. By special privilege of Pope Leo X, granted June 22, 1513, he, an otherwise earnest and pious man, was permitted to hold all these benefices in addition to his bishopric of Spires."[2] A contemporary, reviewing the condition of the worldly-minded bishops, complains " that the higher clergy are chiefly to blame for the careless way in which the cure of souls is exercised. They place unsuitable shepherds over the people, while they themselves draw the tithes. Many seek to unite in their grasp the greatest possible number of livings without fulfilling the duties they entail and waste the revenues of the Church in luxury, on servants, pages, dogs and horses. One seeks to outvie the other in ostentation and luxury."[3] One of the most important explanations of the fact, that, at the very outset of the religious innovation, the falling away from the Church took place with such astonishing celerity, is to be found in the corruption and apathy of the episcopate.[4]

[1] Janssen-Pastor, " Gesch. des deutschen Volkes," I[18], p. 703; English translation, " Hist. of the German People," ii., p. 297. See also Pastor, " Hist. of the Popes " (Engl. trans.), vol. vii., p. 290 ff.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, p. 700. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 703.

Bertold Pirstinger, Bishop of Chiemsee and author of the lament "*Onus ecclesiæ*," wrote sadly in 1519: "Where does the choice fall upon a good, capable and learned bishop, where on one who is not inexperienced, sensual and ignorant of spiritual things? . . . I know of some bishops who prefer to wear a sword and armour rather than their clerical garb. It has come to this, that the episcopate is now given up to worldly possessions, sordid cares, stormy wars, worldly sovereignty. . . . The prescribed provincial and diocesan synods are not held. Hence many Church matters which ought to be reformed are neglected. Besides this, the bishops do not visit their parishes at fixed times, and yet they exact from them heavy taxes. Thus the lives of the clergy and laity have sunk to a low level and the churches are unadorned and falling to pieces." The zealous bishop closes his gloomy description, in which perhaps he is too inclined to generalise, with a touching prayer to God for a true reformation from within: "Therefore grant that the Church may be reformed, which has been redeemed by Thy Blood and is now, through our fault, near to destruction."[1] He considers, however, that a reform of the Church undertaken from within and preserving her faith and institutions is what is needed. The deterioration was in his eyes, and in those of the best men of the day, undoubtedly very great, but not irreparable.

A glance at the work of many excellent men, such as Trithemius, Wimpfeling, Geiler of Kaysersberg and others, may serve as a warning against an excessive generalisation with regard to the deterioration in the ranks of the higher and lower clergy. Weaknesses, disorders and morbid growths are far more apparent to the eyes of contemporaries than goodness, which usually fails to attract attention. Even Johann Nider, the Dominican, who, as a rule, is unsparing in lashing the weaknesses of the clergy of his day, is compelled to speak a word of warning: "Take heed never to pass a universal judgment when speaking only of many, otherwise you will never, or hardly ever, escape passing an unjust one."[2]

That there was, however, the most pressing need of a reform in the lives of both higher and lower clergy is proved by a glance at the state of the priesthood. The position

[1] Janssen-Pastor, *ibid.*, p. 701. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 721.

of the lower clergy, in comparison with that of their betters "who rolled in riches and luxury," was one not in keeping with the dignity of their state. "Apart from the often very precarious tithes and stole-fees they had no stipend, so that their poverty, and sometimes also their avarice, obliged them to turn to other means of livelihood, which . . . necessarily exposed them to the contempt of the people. There can be no doubt that 'a very large portion of the lower clergy had fallen so far from the ideal of their calling, that one may speak of the priestly proletariat of that day, using the word in both its ordinary and its literal sense.' This clerical proletariat was ready to join any movement which promised to promote its own low aims."[1]

The number of clergy, largely owing to the excessive multiplication of small foundations without any cure of souls, had increased to such an extent that among so many there must necessarily have been a very large number who had no real vocation, while their lack of employment must have spelt a real danger to their morals. Attached to two churches at Breslau at the end of the fifteenth century were 236 clerics, all of them mere Mass-priests, i.e. ordained simply to say Mass in the chantry chapels founded with very small endowments. Besides the daily celebration, these Mass-priests had as their only obligation the recital of the Breviary. In the Cathedral at Meissen there were, in 1480, besides 14 canons, 14 Mass-priests and 60 curates. In Strasburg the Cathedral foundation comprised 36 canonries, that of St. Thomas 20, Old St. Peter's 17, New St. Peter's 15 and All Saints' 12. In addition to these were also numerous deputies who were prepared to officiate at High Mass in place of the actual beneficiaries. Of such deputies there were no fewer than 63 attached to the Cathedral, where there were also 38 chaplaincies. In Cologne Johann Agricola gives the number of "priests and monks" (though he adds "so it is said") as 5000; on another occasion he estimates the number of monks and nuns only, at 5000. What is certain is that the "German Rome" on the Rhine numbered at that time 11 collegiate foun-

[1] Janssen-Pastor, *ibid.*, pp. 703, 704. The words in single inverted commas are from J. E. Jörg, "Deutschland in der Revolutionsperiode 1522–26," Freiburg, 1851, p. 191.

dations, 19 parish churches, over 100 chapels, 22 monasteries, 12 hospitals and 76 religious houses.[1]

The above-mentioned Bishop of Chiemsee attributes the corruption of the priesthood principally to the misuse by clergy and laity of their right of patronage both in nominations and by arbitrary interference. Geiler of Kaysersberg is of the same opinion; he attributes to the laity, more particularly to the patrons among the nobility, the sad condition of the parishes. Uneducated, bad, immoral men were now presented, he says, not the good and virtuous.[2] Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, who did so much service to Germany, had declared quite openly the cause of the deformation of the clerical system to be the admission to Holy Orders of unworthy candidates, the concubinage of the clergy, plurality of benefices, and simony. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the complaints increased, more especially with regard to the immorality of the clergy. "The numerous regulations of bishops and synods leave no doubt about the fact that a large portion of the German clergy transgressed the law of celibacy in the most flagrant manner."[3] A statement which was presented to the Dukes of Bavaria in 1477 declared that in the opinion of many friends and advocates of a healthy reform, an improvement in the morals of the clergy, where the real cause of all the Church's evils lay, must be taken in hand. It is true there were districts where a blameless and praiseworthy clergy worked, as, for example, the Rhine-Lands, Schleswig-Holstein and the Algäu. On the other hand, in Saxony, Luther's home, and in Franconia and Bavaria great disorders were reported in this respect. The "*De ruina ecclesiæ*," an earlier work, attributed to Nicholas of Clémanges, tells us of bishops in the commencement of the fifteenth century who, in consideration of a money payment, permitted concubinage to their clergy, and Hefele's "History of the Councils" gives numerous synodical decrees of that date forbidding the bishops to accept

[1] Janssen-Pastor, *ibid.*, p. 705 f. See below (vol. ii., ch. xiv. 5) what we say regarding the clergy and monasteries at Erfurt.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 712.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 709. On the Synods, see Hefele-Hergenröther, "Konziliengesch.," vol. viii. Cp. Janssen-Pastor, as above, p. 680 f., and H. Grisar, "Ein Bild aus dem deutschen Synodalleben im Jahrhundert vor der Glaubensspaltung" ("Hist. Jahrb.," 1, 1880, pp. 603–40).

money or presents in return for permitting or conniving at concubinage.[1]

Along with concubinage many of the higher clergy displayed a luxury and a spirit of haughty pride which repelled the people, especially the more independent burghers. Members of the less fortunate clergy gave themselves up to striving after gain by pressing for their tithes and fees and rents, a tendency which was encouraged both in high and low by the excessive demands made by Rome. Worthless so-called courtisans, i.e. clerks furnished with briefs from the Papal Court (*corte*), seized upon the best benefices and gave an infectious example of greed, while at the same time their action helped to add fuel to the prejudice and hatred already existing for the Curia.[2]

Innumerable were the causes of friction in the domain of worldly interests which gave rise to strife and enmity between laity and clergy. Laymen saw with displeasure how the most influential and laborious posts were filled, not by the beneficiaries themselves, but by incapable representatives, while the actual incumbents resided elsewhere in comfortable ease and leisure at the expense of the old foundations endowed by the laity. On the other hand, the churches and monasteries complained of the rights appropriated or misused by the princes and nobility, an abuse which often led to the monasteries serving as homes for worn-out officials, or to the vexatious seizure and retention of the estates of deceased priests or abbots. It is clear that such a self-seeking policy on the part of the powerful naturally resulted in the most serious evils and abuses in Church matters, quite apart from the bad feeling thus aroused between the clerical and lay elements of the State.

The richer monasteries in particular had to submit to becoming the preserves of the nobles, who made it their practice to provide in this way for the younger scions of

[1] Nicolaus de Clemangiis, "*De ruina ecclesiæ*," c. 22, in Herm. von der Hardt, "*Magnum œcumenicum Constantiense Concilium*," Helmestad., 1700, 1, 3 col., 23 *sq.*; Hefele, as above, 7, pp. 385, 416, 422, 594; 8, p. 97. Ioh. de Segovia, "Hist. syn. Basil.", Vindob., 1873, 2, p. 774: "*Quia in quibusdam regionibus nonnulli iurisdictionem ecclesiasticam habentes pecuniarios questus a concubinariis percipere non erubescunt, patiendo eos in tali fœditate sordescere.*"

[2] Cp. on the "courtisans," Janssen-Pastor, *ibid.*, pp. 715–18.

their family, and for that reason sought to prevent members of the middle classes being admitted to profession. The efforts to reform lax monasteries, which are often met with about the close of the Middle Ages, were frequently stifled by these and similar worldly influences.

In the disintegration of ecclesiastical order, the power and influence of the rulers of the land with regard to Church matters was, as might be expected, constantly on the increase.

Many German princes, influenced by the ideas with regard to the dignity of the State which came into such vogue in the fifteenth century, and dissatisfied with the concessions already made to them by the Church, arrogated still further privileges, for example, the taxation of Church lands, the restriction of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the so-called Government Placet and an oppressive right of visiting and supervising the parishes within their territories. There had thus grown up in many districts a system of secular interference in Church matters long before the religious apostasy of the sixteenth century resulted in the total submission of the Church to the Protestant princes of the land. The Catholic ruler recognised in principle the doctrines and rights of the Church. What, however, was to happen if rulers, equipped with such twofold authority, altered their attitude to the Church on the outbreak of the schism? Their fidelity was in many cases already put to a severe test by the disorders of the clergy, which were doing harm to their country and which Rome made no attempt to suppress. The ecclesiastico-political complaints of the princes (the famous Gravamina) against Rome are proofs of their annoyance; for these charges, as Dr. Eck pointed out, were for the most part well founded; Eck's opinion was shared by other authorities, such as Bertold von Henneberg, Wimpfeling, Duke George of Saxony, and Aleander the Papal Nuncio, who all express themselves in the same manner regarding the financial grievances against Rome, which were felt in Germany throughout all ranks and classes down to the meanest individual.[1]

"On account of these and other causes the irritation and opposition to the Holy See had, on the eve of the great German schism, reached boiling point; this vexation is

[1] Cp. Janssen-Pastor, *ibid.*, p. 743.

explained, as the '*Gravamina nationis Germanicæ*' clearly prove, by the disorders of the Curia, and still more by its unceasing demands." "That the smouldering discontent broke into open flame was the doing of those scoffers without faith or conscience, such as the Humanists, who persisted in pouring on the fire the oil of their sophistries."[1] The Catholic historian from whom these words are borrowed rightly draws attention to the "mistaken policy" entered on by Luther's followers when they attacked the hierarchical order on account of the disorders rampant in the life and administration of the Church. The success of their "mistaken policy" was a "speaking proof of the coarseness, blindness and passion of the German people at that time," but in its practical results their policy helped to bring about an ever-to-be-regretted alteration and to open a yawning chasm which still exists to-day. "That the vexation was not altogether without cause no honest historian can deny, whatever his enthusiasm for the Catholic Church," for "the action of Churchmen, whether belonging to the hierarchy or to the regular or secular clergy, cannot be misunderstood. Throughout the whole of Christendom, and particularly in Germany, the general state of things was deplorable. . . . Even though the evils of the waning Middle Ages may have been, and still continue to be, grossly exaggerated by Protestants, and though in the fifteenth century we see many cheering examples and some partially successful attempts at reform, yet there still remains enough foulness to account psychologically for the falling away."[2]

And yet the disorders in matters ecclesiastical in Germany would not have entailed the sad consequences they did had they not been accompanied by a great number of social

[1] Jos. Schmidlin, "Das Luthertum als historische Erscheinung" ("Wissenschaftl. Beilage" to "Germania," 1909, Nos. 13–15), p. 99 f. Cp. Albert Weiss, "Luther und Luthertum" (in Denifle's 2nd vol.), p. 34 ff.

[2] Schmidlin, as above. Also Albert Weiss, as above, p. 108, allows: "The conditions of things at the commencement of the sixteenth century were such that their continuance was clearly impossible, and it was easy to predict a catastrophe. . . . The abuses were great and had become in some cases intolerable, so that we can understand how many lost courage, patience and confidence. . . . It is true that everything was not corrupt, but the good there was was too feeble to struggle with success against the evil." Nevertheless, in the genesis of the movement which led to the falling away from the Church, in

evils, especially the intense discontent of the lower classes with their position and a hostile jealousy of the laity against the privileges and possessions of the clergy. Savage outbreaks of rebellion against the old traditional order of things were of frequent occurrence. In many localities the peasants were in arms against their princes and masters for the improvement of their conditions; the knights and the nobility, to say nothing of the cities, gave themselves up to the spirit of aggrandisement referred to above. It was just this spirit of unrest and discontent of which the coming mighty movement of intellectual and religious reform was to avail itself.

If we look more closely at Italy and Rome we find that in Italy, which comprised within its limits the seat of the supreme authority in the Church and of which the influence on civilisation everywhere was so important, complete religious indifference had taken root among many of the most highly cultured. The Renaissance, the famed classic regeneration, had undergone a change for the worse, and, in the name of education, was promoting the most questionable tendencies. After having been welcomed and encouraged by the Papacy with over-great confidence it disappointed both the Popes and the Church with its poisonous fruits.

At the time that the Holy See was lavishing princely gifts on art and learning, the pernicious system of Church taxation so often complained of by the nations was becoming more and more firmly established. This taxation, which had started at the time of the residence of the Popes at Avignon in consequence of the real state of need in which the central government of the Church then stood, became more and more an oppressive burden, especially in Germany. It was exploited by Luther in one of his earliest controversial writings where, voicing the popular discontent in that spiteful language of which he was a master, he joined his protest to that of the German Estates of the realm.

spite of the more favourable view of the conditions which Weiss elsewhere takes, the real abuses in the Church, even in his own account, play a prominent part. That Luther's work was not "necessary in view of the moral corruption" (p. 6), and that it "did not follow as an inevitable result" of the same (p. 37), but, on the contrary, was merely facilitated by circumstances, will be granted him by all who review the period with an unprejudiced mind

Combining truth and fancy, the administration of the Papal finances became in his hands a popular and terribly effective weapon. It has frequently been pointed out how much the authority of the Holy See suffered in the preceding age, not only on account of the Western Schism when three rival claimants simultaneously strove for the tiara, but also through the so-called reforming councils and their opposition to the constitution of the Church, through the political mistakes of the Popes since they established their headquarters in France, through the struggle they waged to assert their power in Italy, that apple of discord of rising nations, and also, in the case of the Avignon Popes, through their lack, or, at any rate, suspected lack, of independence. To this we must add the shocking behaviour of the Curial officials and of several of the cardinals in the Eternal City, especially at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, also the disgraceful example of Alexander VI and the Borgia family, the bearing of his successor Julius II, more befitting a soldier than an ecclesiastic, and the very worldly spirit of Leo X and his Court. Ostentation and the abuse of worldly possessions and Church revenues which Alvarez Pelayo, the Spanish Franciscan, had already bewailed in his "*De planctu ecclesiæ*" had risen to still greater heights at Rome. The work of this severe critic, who, in spite of his fault-finding, was nevertheless well disposed to the Curia, was in general circulation just previous to Luther's appearance on the field; it was several times reprinted, for instance, at Ulm in 1474, and again at Lyons in 1517, with a dedication to the later Pope Hadrian VI. It is there we find the indignant assertion, that those who bear the dignity of the primacy are God's worst persecutors.[1] In the work "*De squaloribus Romanæ curiæ*" various well-founded complaints were adduced, together with much that was incorrect and exaggerated. The book "*De ruina ecclesiæ*" (see above, p. 50) contained accusations against the Popes and the government of the Church couched in rude and violent language, and these too gained new and stronger significance at the end of the fifteenth and commencement of the sixteenth century. We actually read therein that

[1] Lib. 1, c. 67, ed. Venet., 1560, fol. 90′, col. 1: "*Heu, Domine Deus, quia ipsi sunt in tua persecutione primi, qui videntur in ecclesia tua primatum diligere et regere principatum.*"

the number of the righteous in the Church is diminutive compared with that of the wicked.[1]

There is no doubt that the state of things, so far as it was known from the above-mentioned books, or from observation or rumour, was busily and impatiently discussed in the company frequented by Luther at the University of Wittenberg. What Luther had himself seen at Rome must have still further contributed to increase the bitterness among his friends.

When the Monk of Wittenberg openly commenced his attacks on the Papacy, it became apparent how far the disorders just alluded to had prepared the way for his plans. It was clear that all the currents adverse to the Papacy were, so to speak, waiting for the coming of one man, who should unchain them with his powerful hand. Amongst those who hitherto had been faithful adherents of the Church, Luther found combustible material—social, moral and political—heaped up so high that a stunning result was not surprising. Had there arisen a saint like St. Bernard, on whose words the world of the Middle Ages had hung, with the Divine gift of teaching and writing as the times demanded, who can say what course events would have taken? But Luther arrived on the scene with his terrible, mighty voice, pressed all the elements of the storm into his service, and, launching a defiance of which the world had never before heard the like, succeeded in winning an immense success for the standard he had raised.[2]

[1] Cap. 39 *sq.* in Herm. von der Hardt, "*Magnum œcum. Constant. Concil.*," 1, 3, col. 41 *sq.*

[2] The author has thought it necessary to keep within limits in treating of the state of those times in order not to be led too far from Luther's own personality. In the course of the work, the circumstances of the time and the prevailing social conditions, so far as they had a determining influence on Luther, will be considered in their own place. Such a separate treatment may, at the same time, acquaint one better with the facts than if a long and exhaustive review of the public conditions were to be given here. With regard to the history of the preliminaries of the schism there already exist many works dealing either generally with those times or with various subjects and districts; these works, however, vary much in merit. While mentioning these we would merely in passing utter a warning against generalisations and *a priori* constructions; especially must we be on our guard against either looking at things in so dark a light as to make Luther's intervention appear absolutely necessary, or judging too favourably of the conditions previous to the religious struggle. In the latter case we come into collision on the one hand with numerous

Luther from the very outset of his career was too liberal in his blame of the customs and conditions in the Church which happened to meet with his disapproval.

Scarcely had he finished his course of studies as a learner than he already began to wax eloquent against various abuses. In his characteristic love of exaggeration of language he did not fear to use the sharpest epithets, nor to magnify the evil, whether in his academic lectures or in the pulpit, or in his letters and writings. He wrote, for instance, to Spalatin in 1516 to dissuade the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, from promoting Staupitz to a bishopric: he who becomes a bishop in these days falls into the most evil of company, all the wickedness of Greece, Rome and Sodom were to be found in the bishops; Spalatin should compare the carryings-on of the present bishops with those of the bishops of Christian antiquity; now a pastor of souls was considered quite exemplary if he merely pursued his worldly business and built up for himself with his riches an insatiable hell.[1]

In his first lectures at Wittenberg he complains that "neither monasteries nor colleges, nor Cathedral churches will in any sort accept discipline." [2] The clergy, he says, in another place, generalising after the fashion common among

data which reveal with absolute certainty the existence of great corruption in the Church, and, on the other hand, we lose sight of the causes which alone offer a satisfactory historical explanation of the great spread of the schism. Luther himself—and it was this which decided us to abbreviate our survey—before the public dispute commenced, was far from possessing, in his quiet cloister, so clear a view of the conditions of the time as a learned historian is now able to obtain. The great world of Germany and Europe did not, as we know, reveal itself so clearly to the Monk and Professor as the little world of Wittenberg, and his few months of travel did not make him a judge of the world and of men. The dark and bright elements of ecclesiastical and popular life were seen by him only superficially and partially. In laying more stress on some traits than on others, he allowed himself to be influenced less by any weighing of actual facts than by his ardent feelings. Certain features of the times appear to have remained quite strange to him, notwithstanding the fact that in more recent descriptions of the influences at work in him, they are made to play a great part: so, for instance, Gallicanism with its anti-monarchical conception of the Church, or the philosophy of the ultra-realists. With respect to Nominalism, more particularly in its Occamistic form, and to mysticism, the case is absolutely different. This will, however, be discussed below (chaps. iv.–v.).

[1] On June 8, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 41.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 444.

preachers, should be the eyes of the Church, but to-day they do not direct the body, i.e. the Faithful, for they are blinded: they are the soul, but they do not give life, but rather kill by their deadly example; about nothing do they trouble less than about souls.[1] In similar language he, in these lectures, represents the bishops and priests as simply "full of the most abominable unchastity"; according to him, they bring to the pulpit nothing but "their views and fables, nothing but masquerading and buffoonery," so that the Church can do nothing but cry aloud over the misery in which it is sunk. "The strength of her youth has forsaken her."[2]

One of the earliest portions of Luther's correspondence which has been preserved and which takes us back to his little world at Wittenberg, throws a clearer light on his character at that time. It deals with an unpleasant dispute with his brother monks at Erfurt, which he became involved in owing to his having taken his doctorate at Wittenberg instead of at Erfurt. The Erfurt monastery reproached him with a serious infringement of the rules and disrespect for the Theological Faculty there; he had, they said, entered the teaching Corporation of Erfurt in virtue of the oath which he had taken in the customary manner on his appointment as Sententiarius, and was therefore under strict obligation to take his degree of Doctor in this Faculty and not elsewhere. Other unknown charges were also made against him, but were speedily withdrawn. It is highly probable that the tension between Observantines and Conventuals increased the misunderstanding.

Nathin, the Erfurt Augustinian, first wrote a rather tactless letter to Luther about it all, as it would appear in the name of the council of the monastery. Luther was extremely angry and allowed his excitement free play. He first expresses his surprise in two letters to the Prior and the council, and was about to despatch a third when he learnt that the accusations against him, with the exception of that regarding his doctorate, had been withdrawn. While Nathin's letter and also the two passionate replies of the young Doctor have been lost, two other letters of the latter regarding the matter exist, and are professedly letters of excuse. The first is in reality nothing of the kind, but rather the opposite. In this letter, dated June 16, 1514, and addressed

[1] "Werke," *ibid.*, 3, p. 170.
[2] "Werke," *ibid.*, 3, p. 216.

to the Prior and the council, Luther to begin with complains vehemently of the evil reports against his person which, according to his information, some of those he was addressing at Erfurt had circulated previously. Nathin's letter had, however, been the last straw. "This letter," he says, which was written in the name of all, angered him so much with its lies and its provoking, poisonous scorn, that "I had almost poured out the vials of my wrath and indignation on his head and the whole monastery, as Master Paltz did." They had probably received the two "stupid letters"; as however the other charges had been withdrawn, he would hold the majority of those he was addressing as excused; they must now, on their part, forget any hurt they had felt at his previous replies; "Lay all that I have done," these are his words, "to the account of the furious epistle of Master Nathin, for my anger was only too well justified. Now, however, I hear still worse things of this man, viz. that he accuses me everywhere of being a dishonourable perjurer on account of the oath to the Faculty which I am supposed to have taken and not kept." He goes on to explain that he had been guilty of no such crime, for the Biblical lectures at the commencement of which he was supposed to have taken the oath, and at which, it is true, in accordance with the customs of the University, such an oath was generally taken, had not been begun by him at Erfurt; at his opening lecture on the Sentences in that town he had, so far as he remembers, taken no oath, nor could he recall having ever taken any oath in the Faculty at Erfurt. He closes with an expression of respect and gratitude to the Erfurt Faculty. Though he was the injured party, he was calm and contented and joyful, for he had deserved much worse of God: they too should lay their bitterness aside, "as God has clearly willed my departure (*excorporatio*) from Erfurt, and we must not withstand God."[1] This letter and Luther's previous steps cannot be regarded as giving proof of a harmoniously attuned disposition. He may have been in the right in the matter of the oath, a question of which it is difficult to judge. It was not, however, very surprising that the Erfurt monks took steps to force Luther to make more satisfactory amends to the Faculty than the strange letter of excuse given above. It is plain that under pressure of some higher authority invoked by them, a second letter, this time of more correct character, was despatched by the Wittenberg Doctor. In judging of this academic dispute, we must bear in mind the store that was set in those days on University traditions.

The second letter in question, dated December 21, 1514, is addressed to the "excellent Fathers and Gentlemen, the Dean and other Doctors of the Theological Faculty of Studies at Erfurt" and in the very first words shows itself to be a humble apology and request for pardon. It contains further information regarding the affair. He begs them at least not to deem him guilty of a fault committed knowingly and out of malice; if he had done anything unseemly, at least it was unintentionally ("*extra dolum*

[1] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 17.

et conscientiam"); he begs them to dispense and ratify, to supply what is wanting and to remit, if not the penalty, at least the fault.[1]

We learn nothing further about the dispute. The negotiations did not lead to the renewal of the good relations with Erfurt, which had been interrupted by his brusque departure. The people of Erfurt were amongst the first to object to the new, so-called Augustinism and Paulinism of the Wittenberg Professor.

[1] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 23 ff.

CHAPTER II

HARBINGERS OF CHANGE

1. Sources, Old and New

THE history of Luther's inward development during his first years at Wittenberg up to 1517, is, to a certain extent, rather obscure. The study of deep psychological processes must always be reckoned amongst the most complex of problems, and in our case the difficulty is increased by the nature of Luther's own statements with regard to himself. These belong without exception to his later years, are uncertain and contradictory in character, and in nearly every instance represent views influenced by his controversies and such as he was wont to advocate in his old age. Thanks to more recent discoveries, however, we are now possessed of works written by Luther in his youth which supply us with better information. By a proper use of these, we are able to obtain a much clearer picture of his development than was formerly possible.

Many false ideas which were once current have now been dispelled; more especially there can no longer be any question of the customary Protestant view, namely, that the Monk of Wittenberg was first led to his new doctrine through some unusual inward religious experience by which he attained the joyful assurance of salvation by faith alone, and not by means of the good works of Popery and monasticism. This so-called inner experience, which used to be placed in the forefront of his change of opinions, as a "Divine Experience," as shown below, must disappear altogether from history.[1] Objection must equally be taken

[1] Wilhelm Braun ("Die Bedeutung der Concupiscenz in Luthers Leben und Lehre," Berlin, 1908) commences chapter ii. ("Luther's Experience in the Monastery," p. 19) as follows: "It is impossible to speak in the strict sense of any religious experience which Luther had in the monastery. It was no catastrophe which, with elemental force, brought about the Reformer's change. Any dramatic element

to some of the views with which Catholics have been wont to explain Luther's apostasy. The path Luther followed, though subject to numerous and varied influences, is now seen to be much less complicated than was hitherto supposed.

Two results already brought to light by other authors are now confirmed. First, the process of his falling away from the Church's teaching was already accomplished in Luther's mind before he began the dispute about Indulgences with Tetzel; secondly, a certain moral change, the outlines of which are clearly marked, went hand in hand with his theological views, indeed, if anything, preceded them; the signs of such an ethical change are apparent in his growing indifference to good works, and to the aims and rules of conventual life, and in the quite extraordinary self-confidence he displayed, more especially when disputes arose.

Characteristic of the ethical side of his nature are the remarks and marginal annotations we have of his, which were published by Buchwald in 1893; these notes were written by Luther in many of the books he made use of in his early days as theological lecturer at Erfurt (1509-10). These books are the oldest available sources for a correct estimation of his intellectual activity. They were found in the Ratsschul-Library at Zwickau. Of special interest is a volume containing various writings of St. Augustine, and a copy of the Sentences of Peter Lombard, which is of great importance on account of the notes. The running

is entirely wanting. There was in his case no Damascus. It is a useless task to attempt, as has been done again and again, to determine the year and the day on which the actual reforming flame burnt up in Luther's soul." The author puts on one side Köstlin-Kawerau's long descriptions of the gradual ripening of the Reformer, his early comprehension of the Pauline writings, due to his inward struggles, etc. He declares Luther's life "cannot be written so long as the beginnings of the Reformer and the growth of his tenets have not yet been made clear. That we are here still in the dark is proved, with regard to Luther's psychology, by his latest Biographies." This Protestant theologian, who works more independently than others, is quite resigned, "in view of the multitude of open questions raised by Luther's early development, to see the fruits and tangible results of Luther research ripen slowly. Our most pressing duty is," he says rightly, "to supply the material while deprecating rash conclusions"; without an acquaintance with the theology of the Middle Ages there is no possibility of understanding Luther: "in this respect Denifle's 'Luther und Luthertum' furnished a wholesome though painful lesson to Protestant theologians" (p. v. f.).

commentary in Luther's early handwriting shows his great industry, enables us to see what especially impressed him, and betrays also his marvellous belief in himself as well as his stormy, unbridled temper.

Of Luther's letters written previous to 1514 only five remain, and are of comparatively little historical interest. Of the year 1515 there is only one, of 1516 there are nineteen, of 1517 already twenty-one, and they increase in importance as well as in number.

In 1513 he began, at Wittenberg University, his Commentary on the Psalms, which has been known since 1876, and continued those lectures up to 1515 or 1516. Following his lively and practical bent, he refers therein to the most varied questions of theology and the religious life, and occasionally even introduces contemporary matters, so that these lectures afford many opportunities by which to judge of his development and mode of thought. First the scholia, which till then had been known only in part, were edited in a somewhat cumbersome form by Seidemann, then a better edition by Kawerau, containing both the scholia and the glosses, followed in 1885.[1] In dividing this exegetical work into scholia and glosses, Luther was following the traditional method of the Middle Ages. The glosses are very short, as was customary; they were written by Luther between the lines of the text itself or in the margin and explained the words and grammatical construction; on the sense they touch only in the most meagre fashion. On the other hand, the detailed scholia seek to unfold the meaning of the verses and often expand into free digressions. In addition to the glosses and the scholia on the Psalms, Kawerau's edition also includes the preparatory notes, written by Luther in a copy of the first edition of the "*Psalterium quincuplex*" of Faber Stapulensis (Paris, 1509), which, like the glosses and scholia, attest both the learning of their author and the peculiar tendency of his mind. Luther used for his text the Latin Vulgate, making a very sparing use of his rudimentary Hebrew. The glosses and the scholia were,

[1] J. K. Seidemann, "Luthers erste und älteste Vorlesungen über die Psalmen, 1513 bis 1516," 2 volumes, Dresden, 1876. Cp. Hering in "Theol. Studien und Kritiken," 1877, p. 633 ff.; G. Kawerau's edition of Luther's works, Weim. ed., volumes iii. and iv., also volume ix., pp. 116–21. He gives the title better, viz. "*Dictata super Psalterium.*"

however, intended chiefly for the professor himself; to the students who attended his biblical lectures Luther was in the habit of giving a short dictation comprising a summary of what he had prepared, and then, with the assistance of his glosses and scholia, dilating more fully on the subject. Scholars' notebooks containing such dictations given by Luther in early days together with his fuller explanation are in existence, but have never been printed.

After the Psalms, the lectures of our Wittenberg "Doctor of the Bible" dealt with St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. This work—of such supreme importance for the comprehension of Luther's spiritual development—with its glosses and scholia complete, was published only in 1908 in Ficker's edition.[1] The lectures on the Book of Judges, edited in 1884 by Buchwald and then again by Kawerau as a work of Luther supposed to have been delivered in 1516, are, according to Denifle, not Luther's at all; they are largely borrowed from St. Augustine, and, at the very most, are a redaction by another hand of the notes of one of Luther's pupils.[2] Transcripts of Luther's lectures on the Epistle to Titus, and Epistle to the Hebrews, delivered in 1516 and 1517 respectively, are still lying unedited in the Vatican Library.[3] On the other hand, his lectures on the Epistle to the Galatians (1516–17) were brought out by himself in 1519.

Further light may be shed on them by the publication of a hitherto unedited student's notebook, discovered at Cologne in 1877.

To the years 1514–20 belongs a rich mine of information in the sermons preached by Luther in the monastery church of the Augustinians, or in the parish church of the town. They consist of more or less detailed notes, written in Latin,

[1] "Anfänge reformatorischer Bibelauslegung." Ed. by Joh. Ficker, 1 volume. "Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief, 1515–16," Leipzig, 1908. See below, chapter vi., 1.

[2] Kawerau's edition in the Weim. ed., volume iv. According to the editor Luther commenced the lectures in 1516; Köstlin, "Luthers Theologie,"[1] prefers the year 1517; in the 2nd ed. the year 1518. Denifle, "Luther und Luthertum," 1, p. 47 ff.; 1[2], p. x. f. Walther Köhler in "Die Christl. Welt," 1904, p. 203, says: "Denifles scharfsinnige Erörterung über die angeblichen Vorlesungen zum Richterbuch wird, denke ich, im wesentlichen Beifall finden. Es ist ihm hier die glückliche Entdeckung gelungen, dass ganze Stücke angeblich Lutherschen Eigentums wörtliche Entlehnungen aus Augustin sind."

[3] See Ficker, "Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief," p. 29 ff.

on the Gospels and Epistles of the Sundays and Feast days; some are the merest sketches, but all, as we may assume, were written down by himself for his own use, or to be handed to others.[1] Chronologically, they are headed by three sermons for Christmas time, probably dating from 1515. The exact dating of these older sermons is sometimes rather difficult, and will have to be undertaken in the future, the Weimar edition of Luther's works having made no attempt at this. The sermons were all of them printed in 1720, with the exception of two printed only in 1886. A complete discourse held at a synodal meeting at Leitzkau, near Zerbst, and printed in 1708, stands apart, and probably belongs to 1515, a year of the greatest consequence in Luther's development. To the same year belongs, without a doubt, the lecture delivered at a chapter of the Order, which may aptly be entitled: "Against the little Saints." (See below, p. 69.)

The first of the works written and published by Luther himself was of a homiletic nature; this was his Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, published in 1517. To the same year, or the next, belong his expositions of the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, consisting of excerpts from his sermons sent by him to the press. The celebrated ninety-five Theses, which led directly to the dispute on Indulgences, followed next in point of time.

Just as the Theses referred to throw light upon his development,[2] so also, and to an even greater extent, do the Disputations which took place at academic festivals about that same period. In these Disputations propositions drawn up either by himself or by his colleagues, were defended by his pupils under his own direction. They display his theological views as he was wont to vent them at home, and are therefore all the more natural and reliable. Of such Disputations we have that of Bartholomew Bernhardi in 1516 "On the Powers and the Will of Man without Grace"; that of Francis Günther in 1517 "Concerning Grace and Nature," also entitled "Against the Theology of the Schoolmen," and the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518,

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, and "Opp. lat. var.," 1.

[2] Cp. Th. Brieger, "Die Gliederung der 95 Thesen Luthers" (in the "Festschrift" in honour of Max Lenz), with "Studien und Versuchen zur neueren Geschichte," 1 Abh.

with Leonard Beyer as defendant of twenty-eight philosophical and twelve theological theses. In the latter theses there are also various notes in Luther's handwriting.

Of Luther's writings, dating from the strenuous year 1518, some of which are in Latin and others in German and which throw some light on his previous development, we may mention in their chronological order: the sermon on "Indulgence and Grace," the detailed "Resolutions" on the Indulgence Theses, the discourse on Penance, the "Asterisci" against Eck, the pamphlet "Freedom of the Sermon on Indulgence and Grace," an exposition of Psalm cx., the reply to Prierias, the sermon on the power of excommunication, then the report of his trial at Augsburg and the sermon on the "Threefold Righteousness." To these we must add his complete edition of "Theologia Deutsch," an anonymous mystical pamphlet of the fourteenth century a portion of which he had brought out in 1516 with a preface of his own.[1]

These are the sources which Luther himself has left behind him and from which the inner history of his apostasy and of his new theology must principally be taken. The further evidence derivable from his later works, his sermons, letters and Table-Talk, will be dealt with in due course.

Only at the end of 1518 was his new teaching practically complete. At that time a new and final element had been added, the doctrine of absolute individual certainty of salvation by "Fiducial Faith." This was regarded by Luther and his followers as the corner-stone of evangelical Christianity now once again recovered. At the commencement of 1519, we find it expressed in the new Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (a new and enlarged edition of the earlier lectures), and in the new Commentary on the Psalms, which was printed simultaneously. Hence Luther's whole process of development up to that time may be divided into two stages by the doctrine of the assurance of salvation; in the first, up to 1517, this essential element was still wanting: the doctrine of the necessity of belief in personal justification and future salvation does not

[1] The writings and theses referred to appear in the two first volumes of the Weim. ed. and of the "Opp. lat." The "Theologia Deutsch" has recently been reprinted by Mandel (1908) from Luther's text.

appear, and for this reason Luther himself, later on, speaks of this time as a period of unstable, and in part despairing, search.[1] The second stage covers the years 1517–18, and commences with the Resolutions and the Augsburg trial, where we find the Professor gradually acquiring that absolute certainty of salvation to which he finally attained through an illumination which he was wont to regard as God's own work.[2]

In the next section we deal merely with the first stage, which we shall seek to elucidate from the psychological, theological and ethical standpoint.

2. Luther's Commentary on the Psalms (1513–15). Dispute with the Observantines and the "Self-righteous"

Presages of the storm which Luther was about to raise were visible in his first course of lectures on the Psalms given at Wittenberg. With regard to several particularly important parts of his work on the Psalms, it would be desirable to determine to what precise time during the period 1513–15 they belong; but this is a matter of considerable difficulty. The polemics they contain against the so-called "Saints by works," the "Self-righteous" and the Observantines, the last of which must here be considered first, seem to belong to the earlier part of the period. In particular his animus against the Observantines, traces of which are plentiful, seems to have been of early growth. It also deserves more attention than has hitherto been bestowed on it, on account of its psychological and theological influence on Luther.[3]

Under the Observantines Luther in his Commentary on the Psalms refers, openly or covertly, to the members of the German Augustinian Congregation, i.e. to those who adhered to that party to which, since his return from Rome, he had been opposed.

[1] See below, chapter vi., 2 ff.

[2] See below, chapter x., 1–2.

[3] W. Braun, "Die Bedeutung der Concupiscenz in Luthers Leben und Lehre," p. 22: "We learn nothing of the dispute then going on between the Conventuals and the Observantines, the laxer and stricter exponents of the monastic Rule; and yet Luther may have experienced their differences in his own person; his second removal from Erfurt to Wittenberg in 1511 was perhaps a disciplinary act, because he and Lang stood on the side of Staupitz and against the Erfurt Council. Probably Luther went to Rome about this very matter."

No sooner had Luther, as Cochlæus remarked (p. 38), "deserted to Staupitz" and begun to defend his opinions, the aim of which was to surrender the privileged position of the Congregation and the stringency of the Rule, than his fiery temper led him to constitute himself the champion of the monasteries with whose cause he had allied himself, particularly that of Wittenberg; indeed, he was, if not actually the first, one of the earliest to take up the cudgels on their behalf. The mission to Rome with which he had previously been entrusted lent him special authority, and his expert knowledge of the case seemed to entitle him to a voice on the subject. To this was added the importance of his position at the University, his reputation as a talented and eloquent lecturer, and his power as a preacher. His sociability drew many to him, especially among the young, and his readiness of tongue marked him out as a real party man.

In his lectures on the Psalms his fiery nature led him to attack sharply the Observantines, whom he frequently mentions by name; even in the lecture-room his aim was to prejudice the young Augustinians who were his audience against the defenders of the traditional constitution; instead of encouraging the rising generation of monks to strive after perfection on the tried and proved lines of their Congregation, he broke out into declamatory attacks against those monks who took their vocation seriously as they received it from their predecessors, and abused them as Pharisees and hypocrites; according to him, they were puffed up by their carnal mind because they esteemed "fasting and lengthy prayers."

There are Pharisees, he cries, even now who extol fasting and long-drawn prayer; "they make rules," but "their zeal is directed against the Lord." There are many in the Church who "dispute about ceremonies and are enthusiastic for the hollowness of exterior observances." "I am acquainted with still more obstinate hypocrites."[1] "It is to be feared that all Observantines, all exempted, and privileged religious, must be reckoned among those puffed up in their carnal mind. How harmful they are to

Concerning his removal and journey to Rome, see above, pp. 29, 38. We learn, it is true, no details about the dispute between the monasteries, and this is perhaps what Braun means; but its continuance is, to my mind, apparent from Luther's statements, as well as from the leading part he took against the Observantines. Ficker ("Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief," 1908, p. xcvii.) only mentions the Observantines cursorily, saying that Luther did not seem much attached to them. Hering ("Theolog. Studien und Kritiken," 1877, p. 627) offers little of interest.

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 61.

the Church has not yet become clear, but the fact remains and will make itself apparent in time. If we ask why they insist upon isolation, they reply: On account of the protection of the cloistral discipline. But that is the light of an angel of Satan."[1]

The following attack on the Observantines in the lectures on the Psalms is on the same lines: There are plenty of "men proud of their holiness and observance, hypocrites and false brothers."[2] "But the fate of a Divine condemnation" will fall upon "all the proud and stiff-necked, all the superstitious, rebellious, disobedient, also, as I fear, on our Observantines, who under a show of strict discipline are only loading themselves with insubordination and rebellion."[3]

The Observantines were plainly in his opinion demonstrating their unruliness by seeking to stand by the old foundation principles of the Congregation. He is angered by their exemption from the General and their isolation from the other German Augustinians, and still less does he like their severities; they ought to fall into line with the Conventuals and join them. We know nothing further of the matter nor anything of the rights of the case; it may be noted, however, that the after history of the party with which Luther sided and the eventual dissolution of the Congregation, appear rather to justify the Observantines.

On the occasion of a convention of the Order at Gotha in 1515—at which the Conventuals must have had a decided majority, seeing that Luther was chosen as Rural Vicar—he delivered, on May 1, the strange address on slander, which has been preserved. He represents this fault as prevalent amongst the opposite party and lashes in unmeasured terms those in the Order "who wish to appear holy," "who see no fault in themselves," but who unearth the hidden sins and faults of others, and hinder them in doing good and "in teaching." Thus the estrangement had proceeded very far. Perhaps, even allowing for Luther's exaggeration, the other side may have had its weaknesses, and been guilty of precipitancy and sins of the tongue, though it is unlikely that the faults were all on one side. It is noticeable, however, that Luther's discourse is not directed against calumniators who invent and disseminate untruths against their opponents, but only against those who bring to light the real faults of their brethren. Scattered through the Latin text of the sermon are highly opprobrious epithets in German. The preacher, for their want of charity, calls his opponents "poisonous serpents, traitors, vagabonds, murderers, tyrants, devils, and all that is evil, desperate, incredulous, envious, and haters." He speaks in detail of their devil's filth and of the human excrement which they busy themselves in sorting, anxious to discover the faults of their adver-

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 155.

[2] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 312. Note "*bonitas fidei*" (=Christian righteousness), "*veritas fidei*" (=Christian truth), "*iustitiæ fidei substantia*" (=essence of Christian righteousness).

[3] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 122

saries.[1] The wealth of biblical passages quoted in this strange address cannot make up for the lack of clear ideas and of any discrimination and judgment as to the limits to be observed by a preacher in commenting on the faults of his time. Luther's fondness for the use of filthy and repulsive figures of speech also makes a very disagreeable impression. It is true that there we must take into account the manners of the time, and his Saxon surroundings, but even Julius Köstlin, Luther's biographer, was shocked at the indecency of the expressions which Luther uses.[2]

The real reason of this discourse was probably that Luther wished to enter on his office as Rural Vicar by striking a deadly blow at the Observant faction and at their habit of crying down his own party. It was this address which his friend Lang, fully alive to its range, sent at once to Mutian, the frivolous leader of the Humanists at Gotha, describing it as a sermon "Against the little Saints."

Returning to the Commentary on the Psalms, we find that therein Luther sometimes makes characteristic statements about himself. On one occasion, doubtless in a fit of depression, he pours out the following effusion: "If Ezechiel says the eyes wax feeble, this prophecy is largely fulfilled at the present time, as I perceive in myself and in many others. They know very well all that must be believed, but their faith and assent is so dull that they are oppressed as by sleep, are heavy of heart, and unable to raise themselves up to God." Such states of lukewarmness were to be banished by means of fear, but woe to him who permits the feeling of self-righteousness to take the place of the weariness, for "there is no greater unrighteousness than excessive righteousness."[3] In the latter words he seems to be again alluding to the "little Saints" and the ostensibly self-righteous members of his Order.

His ill-humour is partly a result of his dissatisfaction with the disorders which he knew or believed to exist in his immediate surroundings, in the Order, and in ecclesiastical life generally. He frequently speaks of them with indignation, though from the new standpoint which he was gradually taking. "We live in a false peace," he cries, and fancy we can draw on the "Treasure of the merits of Christ and the Saints." "Popes and bishops are flinging about graces and

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 675; 1, p. 44.

[2] Köstlin, "Martin Luther," 1^2, p. 125. In the 5th edition by Köstlin and Kawerau (vol. i., p. 122) the disapproving comment of Köstlin's was suppressed.

[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 423.

indulgences." [1] Unmindful of the consequences, he diminished the respect of his youthful hearers for the authority of the Church. As to the religious life, he was wont to speak as follows: "Here come men of religion and vaunt their confraternities and indulgences at every street corner only to get money for food and clothing. Oh! those begging friars! those begging friars! those begging friars! Perhaps you are to be excused because you receive alms in God's name, and preach the word and perform the other services gratis. That may be, but see you look to it." [2] These words in the mouth of one who was himself a member of a mendicant Order, for this the Augustinian Hermits undoubtedly were, amounted to an attack on the constitution of his own Congregation.

In his Commentary on the Psalms he frequently at one and the same time rails at the "self-righteous" and "holy by works" and at the opposition party in his Order, so that it is not easy to distinguish against whom his attacks are directed. Already at this period he shows a certain tendency to under-estimate the value of Christian good works and to insist one-sidedly on the power and efficacy of faith and on the application of the merits of Christ.

Most emphatically, as opposed to trust in good works and merits, does he insist on the grace of Christ, the "*nuda et sola misericordia Dei et benignitas gratuita*" which must be our support and stay.[3] His exhortations against works and human efforts sound as though intended to dissuade from any such, whether inward or outward, as though the merits of Christ and the righteousness which God gives us might thereby suffer.[4] Man's interior efforts towards repentance by means of the contemplation of the misery and the consequences of sin, do not appeal to

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 424. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 42, where he explains Psalm iv. 1 (*Cum invocarem exaudivit me Deus iustitiæ meæ*) as follows and underlines same (his grandson Johann Ernst Luther has added in the margin: "*Locus illustris de iustificatione*"): "*Vide quam vera et pia est ista confessio, quæ* NIHIL SIBI DE MERITIS ARROGAT. *Non enim ait 'cum multa fecissem, vel opere, ore aut aliquo meo membro meruissem,' ut intelligas, eum* NULLAM IUSTITIAM ALLEGARE, *nullum meritum iactare, nullam dignitatem ostentare, sed* NUDAM ET SOLAM MISERICORDIAM DEI *et benignitatem gratuitam extollere, quæ nihil in eo invenit.*"

[4] Cp. *ibid.*, 3, pp. 172, 288, 355, 439, 514; and 4, p. 19, etc. Hunzinger, who quotes these and other passages, says: "He warns much against our own works and desire to gain merit" ("Luther und die deutsche Mystik," in "Neue kirchl. Zeitschrift," 19, 1908, Hft. 11, pp. 972-88, p. 978).

him. He is well aware that repentance consists in sorrow for and hatred of sin,[1] but he says that he himself has no personal experience of this kind of compunction.[2] He complains that so many turn to exterior works, they "follow their own inventions and make rules of their own at their choice; their ceremonies and the works they have devised are everything to them": but to act thus is to set up "a new standard of righteousness instead of cultivating the spiritual things which God prescribes, namely, the Word of God, Grace and Salvation. These persons are in so much the greater error because it is a fine spiritual by-path, they are obstinate and stiff-necked, full of hidden pride in spite of the wonderful humility of which they make a show." At last, carried away by his anger with what is mostly a phantom of his own creation, he exclaims: "Yes, they are given up to spiritual idolatry, a sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no forgiveness."[3]

With such-like harsh accusations of presumptuous zeal for good works he frequently attacks the "*captiosi et contentiosi monachi et sacerdotes*." Let us go for them, he cries, since they are proud of despising others.[4] Obedience and humility they have none, for they are seduced by the angel of darkness, who assumes the garb of an angel of light. They wish to do great works and they set themselves above the small and insignificant things demanded by obedience. These devotees in religious dress ("*religiosi devotarii*") should beware of putting their trust in the pious exercises peculiar to them, while they remain lazy, languid, careless, and disobedient in the common life of the Order.[5] The last words "*si in iis quæ sunt conventualia et communia*" are, in the MS., pointed to by a hand drawn in the margin. The term "*conventualia*" seems reminiscent of the Conventuals, but not much further on, in the Commentary on the same Psalm (cxviii.), we find the word "observance." The Psalmist, he says, implicitly condemns "those who are proud of their holiness, and observance, who destroy humility and obedience."[6] He goes on to advocate something akin to Quietism, saying we should do, not our own works, but God's works, i.e. "those which God works in us": everything we do of ourselves belongs only to outward or carnal righteousness.[7] It is quite possible that he did not wish to deny the correct sense these words might convey, for, elsewhere

[1] Weim. ed., 3, p. 537 ff. on Psalm lxxvi.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 549: "*Inde et mihi* [*psalmus* lxxvi.] *difficilis, quia extra compunctionem sum et loquor de compunctione*"; in such matters one must be able "*intus sentire*"; "*igitur quia meæ compunctionis practica non possum, declarabo eum* [*psalmum*] *ad exemplum et ex practica B. Augustini* ('Confess.,' 1, 8)."

[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 331 f.

[4] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 78. [5] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 306 f. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

[7] *Ibid.*, 3, p. 541. "*Non in viribus nostris et iustitiis operemur, sed opera Dei discamus operari . . . Eruditus* [*psalmi auctor*] *concludit, opera Dei non esse, nisi quæ Deus in nobis operetur. Quare iustitiæ et opera nostra coram eo nihil sunt, ideoque opera exterioris iustitiæ non sunt opera Dei*," p. 542: "*Omnia ista* (Ps. lvi. 13) *dicuntur*

in his controversies, he appears unaware of the exaggeration of his language. But the skirmish with the so-called self-righteous had a deeper explanation. Luther was so fascinated with the righteousness which God gives through faith, that man's share in securing the same is already relegated too much to the background.

Thus he explains the verse of Psalm cxlii. where the words occur "Give ear to my supplication in Thy truth and hear me in Thy righteousness" as follows: "Hear me by Thy mercy and truth, i.e. through the truth of Thy promises of mercy to the penitent and those who beseech Thee, not for my merits' sake; hear me in Thy righteousness, not in my righteousness, but in that which Thou givest and wilt give me through faith."[1] With words of remarkable forcefulness he declares that, to be in sin, only makes more evident the value of the "*iustitia*" which comes through Christ. "It is therefore fitting that we become unrighteous and sinners"; what he really means to say is, that we should feel ourselves to be such.[2] Elsewhere he dwells, not incorrectly, but with startling emphasis, on the fact that justification comes only from God and without any effort on our part (*gratis*),[3] and that it is not due to works;[4] sanctification must proceed not from our own righteousness and according to the letter, but from the heart, and with grace, spirit and truth.[5] The desire for justification is to him the same as the desire for "a lively and strong faith in which I live and am justified." "Enliven me," he says, "i.e. penetrate me with faith, because the just man lives by faith; faith is our life."[6]

Even at that time he was not averse to dwelling on the strength of concupiscence and, in his usual hyperbolical style, he lays stress on the weakness and wickedness of human nature. "We are all

contra superbos et iustos apud se, qui meditantur, quomodo sua opera statuant et suas adinventiones exerceant." He therefore blames them: "*Foris ambulant in carne et carnali iustitia,*" etc. Cp. *ibid.*, 4, p. 281 against "*proprietarii iustitiæ*" who, in exchange for good works, have taken out righteousness on lease.

[1] Weim. ed., 4, p. 443. Cp. *ibid.*, 3, pp. 174, 178, where Romans i. 17, "*Iustitia Dei revelatur in eo* [*evangelio*]," is quoted with the correct traditional meaning.

[2] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 383. The passage reminds one of the "*esto peccator et pecca fortiter,*" which will be referred to later. It reads: "*Æquum est infirmari secundum carnem, ut inhabitet in nobis virtus Christi* (2 Cor. xii. 9) *in homine interiori.* ÆQUUM EST INIUSTOS ET PECCATORES FIERI, *ut iustificetur Deus in sermonibus suis* (Ps. l. 6): *quia non venit iustos vocare sed peccatores* (Matt. ix. 13), *id est ut iustitia nostra agnoscatur nihil esse nisi peccatum et pannus menstruatæ* (Is. lxiv. 6), *ac sic potius iustitia Christi regnet in nobis, dum per ipsum et in ipso confidimus salvari, non ex nobis, ne auferamus ei nomen, quod est Jhesus, id est Salvator.*"

[3] Cp. Weim. ed., 3, pp. 290, 284.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

[5] *Ibid.*, 3, p. 320 ff.; 4, p. 300 ff., 312.

[6] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 325.

a lost lump" ;[1] "whoever is without God sins necessarily, i.e. he is in sin" ;[2] "unconquerable" or "necessary" are terms he is fond of applying to concupiscence in his discourses.[3] From other passages it would almost appear as if, even then, he admitted the persistence of original sin, even after baptism ; for instance, he says that the whole world is "*in peccatis originalibus*," though unaware of it, and must therefore cry "*mea culpa*" ;[4] our righteousness is nothing but sin ;[5] understanding, will, and memory, even in the baptised, are all fallen, and, like the wounded Jew, await the coming of the Samaritan.[6] He also speaks of the imputation of righteousness by God who, instead of attributing to us our sins, "imputes [the merits of Christ] unto our righteousness."[7]

Still, taken in their context, none of these passages furnish any decisive proof of a deviation from the Church's faith. They forebode, indeed, Luther's later errors, but contain as yet no explicit denial of Catholic doctrine. In this we must subscribe to Denifle's view, and admit that no teaching actually heretical is found in the Commentary on the Psalms.[8]

With reference to man's natural powers, that cardinal point of Luther's later teaching, neither the ability to be good and pleasing to God, nor the freedom of choosing what is right and good in spite of concupiscence, is denied.[9] Concupiscence, as he fre-

[1] Weim. ed., p. 343 : "*omnes sumus massa perditionis et debitores mortis æternæ.*"

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 354. [3] Cp. *ibid.*, 4, p. 207. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 497.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 383. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

[7] *Ibid.*, 3, p. 171 : "*Quod ex nullis operibus peccata remittuntur, sed sola misericordia Dei non imputantis.*" Cp. p. 175.

[8] Cp. on Concupiscence, in the Commentary on the Psalms, Denifle, 1^2, p. 441 f. and pp. 453, 476. A. Hunzinger, "Lutherstudien," 1 ; "Luthers Neuplatonismus in den Psalmvorlesungen," Leipzig, 1906, Preface : "Denifle's 'Luther' is correct ; Luther during the first years of his literary activity stood on Catholic ground ; nor is it by any means the case that from the beginning the reforming element was contained in germ in Luther's theology." On the other hand, the elements which were to lead him to take the step from the obscure theology of the Commentary on the Psalms to the heretical theology of 1515–16 —viz. his false mysticism and misapprehension of the Epistle to the Romans—were already present. The most suspicious passage in the Commentary on the Psalms is 4, p. 227, which points to the continuance of his doubts regarding predestination ; he says that Christ had drunk of the chalice of suffering for the elect, but not for all. See the next note, especially the first quotation.

[9] Weim. ed., 4, p. 295 : "*Anima mea est in potestate mea et in libertate arbitrii possum eam perdere vel salvare eligendo vel reprobando legem tuam.*" Concupiscence has not yet become original sin itself, but is still a mere relic of the same (3, pp. 215, 453). Köstlin, in "Luthers Theologie," 1^2, p. 66, quotes other passages from the Com-

quently admonishes us, must be driven back, "it must not be allowed the mastery," though it will always make itself felt; it is like a Red Sea through the midst of which we must pass, refusing our consent to the temptations which press upon us like an advancing tide.[1] Luther lays great weight on the so-called Syntheresis, the inner voice which, according to the explanation of the schoolmen, he believes cries longingly to God, by whom also it is heard; it is the ineradicable precious remnant of good left in us,[2] and upon which grace acts. Man's salvation is in his own hands inasmuch as he is able either to accept or to reject the law of God.[3] Luther also speaks of a preparation for grace ("*dispositio et præparatio*") which God's preventing, supernatural grace assists.[4] He expressly invokes the traditional theological axiom that "God's grace is vouchsafed to everyone who does his part."[5] He even teaches, following Occam's school, that such self-preparation constitutes a merit "*de congruo*."[6] He speaks as a Catholic of the doctrine of merit, admits the so-called *thesaurus meritorum* from which indulgences derive their efficacy, and, without taking offence, alludes to satisfaction (*satisfactio operis*),[7] to works of supererogation,[8] as also to the place of purification in the next world (*purgatorium*).[9]

Regarding God's imputing of righteousness he follows, it is true, the Occamist doctrine, and on this subject the following words are the most interesting: faith and grace by which we today (i.e. in the present order of things) are justified, would not justify without the intervention of the *pactum Dei*; i.e. of God's mercy, who has so ordained it, but who might have ordained otherwise.[10] Friedrich Loofs rightly says regarding imputation in the Commentary on the Psalms: "It must be noted that the

mentary on the Psalms, thus, 3, p. 584: God is more ready to have mercy on us than we are to beseech Him; but He is unable to have mercy on us if our pride proves a hindrance ("*quando nos nolumus . . . prohibente nostra superbia*"). In his marginal notes on Peter Lombard (written 1509) Luther had rightly said: "*Liberum arbitrium damnatur quia . . . gratiam . . . oblatam et exhibitam non acceptat vel acceptam non custodit.*" "Werke," Weim. ed., 9, p. 71.

[1] Weim. ed., 3, p. 546: "*Desideriis ait apostolus, carnis non esse obediendum, nec regnare peccatum debere licet esse desideria et peccata in carne prohiberi non possit. . . . In mediis tentationibus eundum est*, as the Israelites passed through the Red Sea. *Sentiri et videre et experiri oportet bonitates et malitias carnis, sed non consentire.*"

[2] *Ibid.*, 3, p. 603: "*Residuum præteritorum bonorum* [of the original state] *quod in affectu remansit syntheresico.*" On the syntheresis and Luther's early views on this subject see Köstlin, "Luthers Theologie," 1^2, p. 51 f., 125.

[3] Weim. ed., 4, p. 295, cp. above, p. 74, n. 9.

[4] *Ibid.*, 3, pp. 89, 101, 200; 4, p. 204 f., 309.

[5] *Ibid.*, 4, pp. 262, 309.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 312

[7] *Ibid.*, 3, pp. 52, 189, 239 f., 424, 462, 466, 603.

[8] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 250.

[9] *Ibid.*, 3, pp. 426, 239.

[10] Weim. ed., 3, p. 289. Cp. *Ibid.*, 4, pp. 329, 312: "*ex pacto et promissione Dei.*"

reputari iustum, i.e. the being-declared-justified, is not considered by Luther as the reverse of making righteous ; on the contrary, the *sine merito iustificari* in the sense of *absolvi* is at the same time the beginning of a new life."[1] "The faith," so A. Hunzinger opines of the passages in question in the same work, "is as yet no imputative faith," i.e. not in the later Lutheran sense.[2]

The Protestant scholar last mentioned has dissected the Commentary on the Psalms in detail ; particularly did he examine its connection with the philosophical and mystical system sometimes designated as Augustinian Neo-Platonism.[3] It may be left an open question whether his complicated researches have succeeded in proving that in the Commentary—interpreted in the light of some of the older sermons and the marginal glosses in the Zwickau books—Luther's teaching resolves itself into a "somewhat loose and contradictory mixture of four elements," namely, Augustinian Neo-Platonism, an Augustinian doctrine on sin and grace, a trace of scholastic theology, and some of the mysticism of St. Bernard.[4] His researches and his comparison of many passages in the Commentary on the Psalms with the works of Augustine, especially with the "*Soliloquia*" and the book "*De vera religione*," have certainly shown that Luther was indebted for his expressions and to a certain extent for his line of thought, to those works of Augustine with which he was then acquainted. He had probably been attracted by the mystical tendency of these writings, by that reflection of Platonism, which, however, neither in St. Augustine's nor in Luther's case, as Hunzinger himself admits, involved any real acceptance of the erroneous ideas of the heathen Neo-Platonism. Luther was weary of the dry Scholasticism he had learned at the schools and greedily absorbed the theology of the Bishop of Hippo, which appealed far more to him, though his previous studies had been insufficient to equip him for its proper understanding. His own words in 1532 express his case fairly accurately. He says: "In the beginning I

[1] "Dogmengesch.," [4] (1906), p. 697 with ref. to "Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 443 : "*sine merito redimi de peccatis*," and similar passages.
[2] "Luther und die deutsche Mystik," p. 976, above, p. 71, n. 4.
[3] "Lutherstudien," 1. See above, p. 74, n. 8.
[4] Hunzinger thus sums up his results in "Luther und die deutsche Mystik," p. 975.

devoured rather than read Augustine." [1] In a marginal note on the Sentences of Peter Lombard he speaks, in 1509, of this Doctor as "*numquam satis laudatus*," like him, he, too, would fain send the "*moderni*" and that "fabulator Aristoteles" about their business.[2]

The obscure and tangled mysticism which the young author of the Commentary on the Psalms built up on Augustine—whose spirit was far more profound than Luther's—the smattering of Augustinian theology, altered to suit his controversial purposes, with which he supplemented his own scholastic, or rather Occamistic, theology, and the needless length of the work, make his Commentary into an unattractive congeries of moral, philosophical and theological thoughts, undigested, disconnected and sometimes unintelligible. Various causes contributed to this tangle, not the least being the nature of the subject itself. Most of the Psalms present all sorts of ideas and figures, and give the theological and practical commentator opportunity to introduce whatever he pleases from the stores of his knowledge. With some truth Luther himself said of his work in a letter to Spalatin, dated December 26, 1515, that it was not worth printing, that it contained too much superficial matter, and deserved rather to be effaced with a sponge than to be perpetuated by the press.[3] There is something unfinished about the work, because the author himself was still feeling his way towards that great alteration which he had at heart; as yet he has no wish to seek for a reform from without the Church, he not only values the authority of the Church and the belief she expounds, but also, on the whole, the learned tradition of previous ages with which his rather scanty knowledge of Scholasticism made him conversant. This, however, did not prevent him attacking the real or imaginary abuses of the Schoolmen, nor was his esteem for the Church and his Order great enough to hinder him from criticising, rightly or wrongly, the condition and institutions of the Church and of monasticism.

The statement made by him in 1537, that he discovered

[1] Veit Dietrich MS. Collecta, fol. 137′ in Seidemann, "Luthers erste Psalmenvorlesung," 1, p. vii.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 9, p. 29. *Ibid.*, "In Augustinum," pp. 7, 23, 24, 27.

[3] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 26 f., probably not meant seriously by Luther.

his new doctrine at the time he took his degree as Doctor, i.e. in 1512, cannot therefore be taken as chronologically accurate. His words, in a sermon preached on May 21, were: "Now we have again reached the light, but I reached it when I became a Doctor . . . you should know that Christ is not sent as a judge." [1]

3. Excerpts from the Oldest Sermons. His Adversaries

In the sermons which Luther, during his professorship, preached at Wittenberg in 1515–16, we notice the cutting, and at times ironical, censure with which he speaks to the people of the abuses and excesses which pervaded the exercise of the priestly office, particularly preaching. He is displeased with certain excesses in the veneration of the Saints, and reproves what he considers wrong in the popular celebration of the festivals of the Church and in other matters. These religious discourses contain many beautiful thoughts and give proof, as do the lectures also, of a rich imagination and great knowledge of the Bible. But even apart from the harsh denunciation of the conditions in the Church, the prevailing tone is one of too great hastiness and self-sufficiency, nor are the Faithful treated justly. It was not surprising that remarks were made, and that he was jeered at as a "greenhorn" by the listeners, who told him that he could not "convert old rogues" with that sort of thing.[2]

He complains bitterly, and with some show of reason, that at that time preaching had fallen to a very low ebb in Germany. The preachers too often treated of trivial and useless subjects, enlarged, with distinctions and subdistinctions, on subjects belonging to the province of philosophy and theology, and lost themselves in artificial allegorical interpretations of the Bible. In their recommendation of popular devotions they sometimes went to extremes and sometimes lapsed into platitude. There was too little of the wealth of thought, power and inward unction of Brother Bertold of Regensburg and his school to be found in the pulpits of that day. Even in Luther's own sermons during these years we meet with numerous defects

[1] "Luthers ungedruckte Predigten," ed. G. Buchwald, 3, 1885, p. 50.

[2] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 121.

of the time, barren speculations in the style of the nominalistic school through which he had passed, too much forcing and allegorising of the Bible text, and too much coarse and exaggerated declamation. To be pert and provoking was then more usual than now, and owing to his natural tendency he was very prone to assume that tone.' The shyness which more recent biographers and admirers frequently ascribe to the young professor is not recognisable in his sermons. That he ever was shy can only be established by remarks dropped by Luther in later life, and, as is well known, such remarks cannot be taken as reliable sources of information concerning his early years. Were Luther's later account correct, then we should be forced to ascribe to the young preacher and professor a burning desire to live in the solitude of his cell and to spend his days quite apart from the world and the debates and struggles going forward in the Church outside. Yet, in reality, there was nothing to which he was more inclined in his sermons than to allow his personal opinions to carry him to violent polemics against people and things displeasing to him; he was also in the habit of crediting opponents more friendly to the Church than he, or even the Church itself, with views which they certainly did not hold. Johann Mensing, one of his then pupils at the University of Wittenberg, speaks of this in words to which little attention has hitherto been paid: "I may say," he writes, "and have often heard it myself, that when Luther had something especially good or new to say in a sermon he was wont to attribute to other theologians the opposite opinion, and in spite of their having written and taught just the same, and of his very likely taking it from them himself, to represent it as a precious thing he had just discovered and of which others were ignorant; all this in order to make a name for himself, like Herostratus, who set fire to the temple of Diana." [1] We may also mention here a remark of Hieronymus Emser. After saying that Luther's sermons were not those of a cleric, he adds: "I may say with truth that I have never in all my life heard such an audacious preacher." [2] These, it is true, are testimonies

[1] Johann Mensing O.P., "Antapologie," Frankfurt, 1533, fol. 18'. Cp. N. Paulus, "Die deutschen Dominikaner im Kampfe mit Luther," 1903, p. 40.

[2] Cp. Evers, "Luther," 1, p. 377.

from the camp of Luther's opponents, but some passages from his early sermons will show the tone which frequently prevails in them.

Already in the Christmas sermons of 1515 Luther does not scruple to place himself, as it were, on the same footing with the prophets, wise men and those learned in the Scriptures, whose persecution Christ foretold, more particularly among the last of the three groups. Even then his view was unorthodox.

"There are some," he says, "who by the study of Holy Scripture form themselves into teachers and who are taught neither by men nor directly by God alone." These are the learned in the Scriptures. "They exercise themselves in the knowledge of the truth by meditation and research. Thus they become able to interpret the Bible and to write for the instruction of others." But such men are persecuted, he continues, and, as the Lord prophesied of the prophets and wise men and scribes that they would not be received, but attacked, so is it also with me. They murmur against my teaching, as I am aware, and oppose it. They reproach me with being in error because "I preach always of Christ as the hen under whose wings all who wish to be righteous must gather." Thus his ideas with regard to righteousness must have been looked upon as importunate or exaggerated, and, by some, in all probability, as erroneous. He immediately launches out into an apology: "What I have said is this: We are not saved by all our righteousness, but it is the wings of the hen which protect us against the birds of prey, i.e. against the devil . . . but, as it was with the Jews, who persecuted righteousness, so it is to-day. My adversaries do not know what righteousness is, they call their own fancies grace. They become birds of prey and pounce upon the chicks who hope for salvation through the mercy of our hen."[1]

Such rude treatment meted out to those who found fault with him (and one naturally thinks of clergy and religious, perhaps even of his very brethren, as the culprits), the denouncing them from the pulpit as "birds of prey," and his claim to lay down the law, this, and similar passages in the sermons, throw a strong light on his disputatious temper.

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 30 f.: "*Semper prædico de Christo, gallina nostra . . . et efficitur mihi errans et falsum.*" He preached, namely, against those "*qui ab alis* [*Domini*] *recedunt in sua propria bona opera . . . et nolunt audire, quod iustitiæ eorum peccata sint. Gratiam maxime impugnant, qui eam iactant.*" The expression "*gallina nostra*" appears also in the Commentary on the Psalms ("Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 71).

In a well-ordered condition of things the Superiors of the Augustinians or the diocesan authorities would have intervened to put a stop to sermons so scandalously offensive; at Wittenberg, however, the evil was left unchecked and allowed to take deeper root. The students, the younger monks and some of the burghers, became loud and enthusiastic followers of the bold preacher. Staupitz was altogether on his side, and, owing to him, also the Elector of Saxony. The Prince was, however, so little of an authority on matters theological that Luther once writes of him that he was "in things concerning God and the salvation of the soul almost seven times blind."[1]

Luther's notes on his Sunday sermons during the summer of 1516—a time when he had already expressed his errors quite plainly in his lectures on the Epistle to the Romans—afford us a glimpse of an acute controversy. At this time his sermons dealt with the first Commandment.

The Gospel for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost with the words: "Beware of false prophets" gives him an all too tempting opportunity for a brush with his adversaries, and, on July 6, he attacks them from the standpoint of his new ideas on righteousness. "Much fasting, and long prayers," he cries, "study, preaching, watching, and poor clothing, these are the pious lambskins under which ravening wolves hide themselves." In their case these are only "works done for show." These Observantines, for all their great outward display of holiness, are "heretics and schismatics." Thus does he storm, evidently applying his words to his brother monks of the Observantine party, who probably had been among the first to criticise him. The following remarks on rebellion and defamation make this application all the clearer.[2] "The true works by which we may recognise the prophets are done in the inner and hidden man. But these proud men are wanting above all in patience and the charity which is forgetful of self, but concerned for others." "When they have to do works which are not to their liking they are slow, rebellious, obstinate, but they well know how to take away the name of others and to pass judgment on them. . . . There is no greater plague in the Church to-day than these men with the words: 'Good works are necessary' in their mouths; men who refuse to distinguish between what is good and evil because they are enemies of the Cross, i.e. of the good things of God."[3]

Such a daring challenge on Luther's part did not fail in its

[1] To Spalatin, June 8, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 40.

[2] Cp. his reproaches against members of his own Order with regard to disobedience and want of charity, which will be given shortly.

[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 61.

effect. Within as well as outside the Order united preparations were being made for a strong resistance, his foes working both openly and in secret.

Luther's adversaries were again made the object of his public vituperation in two sermons preached on the same day a little later. This was on July 27, the 10th Sunday after Pentecost. In one sermon the passionate orator attempted to show the danger of the times; he describes how powerful the devil had become and how under the appearance of good works he was making certain persons "fine breakers" of the first Commandment. "And these venture," he says, "to shoot arrows secretly against those who are right of heart."[1] In the other sermon his opponents had to submit to being called—in allusion to the Sunday's Gospel of the Pharisee and the Publican—real "Pharisees, who by reason of their assumed holiness and merits seek the praise of men," whereas in reality, with their self-righteousness, they have merely erected an idol in their hearts.[2]

Even this was not enough however. The continuous complaints of those who thought differently from himself called Luther into the field again the very next Sunday (August 3).[3] They heard what they might have anticipated, as soon as the fiery preacher, whose appearance was doubtless greeted by his pupils and adherents with looks of joy, got to work on his thesis: To place our hope in anything but God, even in the merit of our good works, is to have false idols before God. Then the stream of words flowed apace against the "proud saints," against the presumptuous assurance of salvation on the part of the servitors of works, against the fools who make the narrow way to heaven still narrower, against the A B C pupils, who know nothing outside their own works. "These are old stagers," he cries, because, like certain horses who only go along one track, they know only the one path of their own works. As though he recollected his own short-lived zeal for the work of the Order, he adds: "At the commencement, when a man first enters on the path of the religious life he has to exercise himself in many good works, fasts, vigils, prayers, works of mercy, submission, obedience and other such-like." But to remain permanently stuck fast in these, that is what makes a man a Pharisee. "The truly pious who are led by the Spirit," he continues, in a vein of peculiar mysticism, "once initiated into these things, do not trouble much more about them. Rather they offer themselves to God, ready for any work to which He may call them, and are led through many sufferings and humiliations without knowing whither they are going."[4]

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 62, Fragment.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 63. (*Sermo contra opinionem sanctitatis et meriti.*)

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 70. (*Sermo de vitiis capitalibus in merito operum et opinione sanctitatis se efferentibus.*)

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 73. Line 25 should read "*in fine quia*" not "*in fine qui*"; and line 28 "*in Deo quieti*" not "*ac Deo quieti.*" The edition elsewhere leaves much to be desired.

Luther frequently spoke at that time in the language of a certain school of mysticism with which he was much enamoured. The following extract from the sermon under consideration, together with some thoughts on similar lines, from his synodal address at Leitzau, belong here.

"The man of God leaves himself entirely in God's hands and does not attach himself to any works. His works are nameless at the commencement, though not at the end, because he does not act, but remains passive; he does not calculate with his own cleverness, or make projects, but allows himself to be led and does differently from what he had intended; thus he is calm and at rest in God. Whereas the self-righteous who abound in their own sense ('*sensuales iustitiarii*') are apt to despair of their own works—for they want to determine and name every word beforehand, and with them the name is the first thing and this they follow up with their works—the man of God on the contrary hurries forward in advance of every name."

In the discourse which Luther wrote, probably in the autumn or winter months of 1515, for Georg Mascov, provost of Leitzau (see above, p. 65), and which was intended for a synodal meeting of the clergy, he says, in his most exaggerated fashion: "The whole world lies as it were under a deluge of false and filthy teaching." The Word of God like a tiny flame is barely kept alive. Egoism, worldliness and vice are predominant. And the remedy? He will cry it aloud over the whole world: the only remedy is to preach "the word of truth" with much greater zeal. The greatest, "nay almost the only sin of the priests" is the neglect of the "word of truth" and it is much to be deplored, according to him, "that priests who fall into sins of the flesh make more account of them than of the neglect of the preaching of the word of truth."[1]

The address deals further at great length with the holy regeneration of man in God. This is something which God works in us while we remain altogether passive: a man's seeking, praying, knocking has nothing to do with it because mercy alone effects it. Man does nothing ("*ipso nihil agente, petente, merente*"); in this mystical regeneration by God, it is as with the natural generation of man: "he who is generated in both cases does not count, and can do nothing by his work or merits towards his begetting, but lies wholly in the will of the Father."

As sons of God we must bear fruit—here the discourse becomes quite practical—and the purpose of this meeting is to demand it of the clergy. "We must not expose our Synod to the scorn of our enemies." It is more important that chastity and every virtue should dwell in the priests than that statutes should be made with regard to readings, prayers, festivals, and ceremonies.

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 10: "*Scatet totus orbis imo inundat . . . doctrinam sordibus.*" The doubts as to the authenticity of this sermon do not deserve attention.

The vague, obscure mysticism which played a part in Luther's spiritual development at that time, as well as his wrong, one-sided interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans, had, as already stated, led him into a heterodox by-way.

A cursory glance at the influence of Scholasticism and Mysticism on his mental progress, may perhaps be here in place.

4. Preliminary Remarks on Young Luther's Relations to Scholasticism and Mysticism

In the years of Luther's development the two great intellectual forces of the Middle Ages, Scholasticism and Mysticism, no longer exercised quite so powerful an influence as of yore, when they ruled over the world of intellect. Their influence on Luther's views and his career was diverse. Scholasticism in its then state of decay, with its endless subtilties and disputatiousness, which, moreover, he knew only under the form of Occam's nominalism, repelled him, to his own great loss. As a result he never acquired those elements of knowledge of true and lasting value to be found in the better schools, of which the traditions embodied the work of centuries of intellectual effort on the part of some of the world's greatest minds. Mysticism, on the other hand, attracted him on account of his natural disposition, so full of feeling and imagination. He had been initiated into it at the monastery by the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure and Gerson, and, later, by the sermons of Tauler and the so-called German Theology. This study had been recommended him by Staupitz and also by his brother monks, especially by Johann Lang. It was, however, the more obscure and ambiguous writings and extracts from mystic works which appealed to him most, owing to his being able to read into them his own ideas.

As regards Scholasticism, his character predisposed him against it. Scholastic learning is founded on conceptual operations of reason; it aims at clear definitions, logical proofs and a systematic linking together of propositions. Luther's mind, on the other hand, inclined more to a free treatment of the subject, one which allowed for feeling and imagination, and to such descriptions as offered a field for his eloquence. One of the chief reasons, however, for his

lifelong dislike of Scholasticism was his very partial acquaintance with the same. He had, as we shall see, never studied its great representatives in the thirteenth century; he had made acquaintance only with its later exponents, viz. the Nominalists of Occam's school, who gave the tone to his theological instructions and whose teachings were very prevalent in the schools in that day. He speaks repeatedly of William of Occam as his teacher. Of Luther's relations to his doctrines we shall have to speak later: some of Occam's views he opposed, others, which happened to be at variance with those of St. Thomas of Aquin, he approved. He would not have attributed to the latter and to other exponents of the better school of Scholasticism such foolish theses as he did—theses of which they never even dreamt—had he possessed any clear notion of their teaching. There can be no doubt that he also imbibed during his first years as a student at Erfurt, the spirit of antagonism against Scholasticism which Humanism with its craving for novelty displayed, an antagonism based ostensibly on disgust at the unclassic form of the former.

Already during the earliest period of his career at Wittenberg, as soon, indeed, as he began to preach and lecture, he commenced his attacks against Scholasticism.

He considers that Aristotle, on whom in the Middle Ages both theologians and philosophers had set such store, had been grossly misunderstood by most of the scholastics; all the good there is in Aristotle, he says, he has stolen from others; whatever in him is right, others must understand and make use of better than he himself.[1]

He often passes judgment on the theology of the Middle Ages from the point of view of the narrow, one-sided school of Occam, and then, with his lively imagination, he grossly exaggerates the opposition between it and St. Thomas of Aquin and the more classic schoolmen. The whole herd of theologians, he says, has been led astray by Aristotle; nor have they understood him in the least; according to him, Thomas of Aquin—the Doctor whom the Church has so greatly honoured and placed at the head of all theologians—did not expound a single chapter of Aristotle aright; "all the Thomists together" have not understood one chapter. Aristotle has only led them all to lay too much stress upon the importance and merit of human effort and human works to the disadvantage of God's grace. Here lay Aristotle's chief crime discovered by Luther, thanks to his own new theology.[2]

[1] Cp. Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 118. Extracts from the first of the Christmas sermons of 1515 (or 1514).

[2] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 128 *seq.*

In his lectures on the Psalms Luther already tells his hearers that the bold loquacity of theology was due to Aristotle ;[1] he makes highly exaggerated remarks regarding the disputes between the Scotists and Occam and between Occam and Scotus.[2] Peter Lombard, no less than Scotus and St. Thomas, comes in for some harsh criticism. But Luther ever reverts to Aristotle. He wishes, so he writes to his friend Lang in February, 1516, to tear off "the Greek mask which this comedian has assumed to pass himself off in the Church as a philosopher ; his shame should be laid bare to all."[3]

Such audacious language had probably never before been used against the greatest minds in the history of human thought by a theological professor, who himself had as yet given no proof whatever of his capacity.

His attacks on Scholasticism and the philosophical and theological schools up to that day, were soon employed to cover his attacks on dogma and the laws of the Church. In 1518 he places Scholasticism and Canon Law on the same footing, both needing reform.[4]

The learned Martin Pollich, who was teaching law at the University of Wittenberg, looked at the young assailant with forebodings as to the future. He frequently said that this monk would overthrow the teaching which yet prevailed at all the universities. "This brother has deep-set eyes," he once remarked, "he must have strange fancies."[5] His strange eyes, with their pensive gleam, ever ready to smile on a friend, and, in fact, his whole presence, made an impression upon all who were brought into close contact with him. It is an undoubted fact, true even of his later days, that intercourse with him was pleasant, especially to those whom he honoured with his friendship or whom he wished to influence. Not only were his pupils at Wittenberg devoted admirers of the brave critic of the Schoolmen, but, little by little, he also gained an unquestioned authority

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 129.

[2] Seidemann, "Luthers Vorlesungen über die Psalmen," 1, p. 211 ; "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 319.

[3] To Joh. Lang, Prior at Erfurt, February 8, 1517. "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 86 : "*Nihil ita ardet animus, quam histrionem illum, qui tam vere Græca larva ecclesiam lusit, multis revelare ignominiamque eius cunctis ostendere.*" De Wette has the letter incorrectly dated February 8, 1516.

[4] Letter to Trutfetter, May 9, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 187.

[5] "Corpus Reform.," 3, p. 154, n. 83. O. Waltz erroneously questions this statement in "Zeitschr. f. Kirchengesch.," 2, 1878, p. 628. Cp. 3, 1879, 305.

over the other professors, the more so as there was no one at the University able or willing to take the risks of a challenge.

The psychological reaction on himself of so high a position at the University must not be under-estimated as a factor in his development. He felt himself to be a pioneer in the struggle against Scholasticism, and one called to reinstate a new theology.

His attitude to mysticism was absolutely different from that which he assumed with regard to Aristotle and Scholasticism.

Luther speaks in praise of Tauler for the first time in 1516, though he had probably become acquainted with him earlier. At about that same time a little booklet, "*Theologia Deutsch*," exercised a great influence upon him.

In a letter to Lang—who was also inclined to look with favour on Tauler, the master of German mystic theology—Luther betrays how greatly he was attracted by this writer. In his sonorous, expansive language, he speaks of him as a teacher whose enlightenment was such, that, though utterly unknown in the theological schools, he contains more real theology than all the scholastic theologians of all the universities put together. He also repeatedly assured his hearers that Tauler's book of sermons had "led him to the spirit."[1]

At that time Luther showed great preference for the exhortations of the German mystics on self-abasement, apathy and abnegation of self. "*Theologia Deutsch*," that little work of an unknown Frankfort priest of the fourteenth century, which he came across in a MS., so fascinated him that, adding to it a preface and his own name, "Martinus Luder," he published it in 1516 at Wittenberg. It was the first occasion of his making use of the press; this first edition was, however, incomplete, owing to the state of the MS.; the work was finally reissued complete and under the title which Luther himself had selected, viz. "A German Theologia," in 1518. In the sub-title of the first edition he had called it a "noble spiritual booklet," and in the preface had praised it, saying that it did not float like foam on the top of the water, but that it had been brought up from the bottom of the Jordan by a true Israelite.[2] In the first edition he had erroneously attributed the booklet to Tauler; in the second he says it is equal in merit to Tauler's own writings. Yet, to tell the truth, it is far from reaching Tauler's high standard of thought. Luther, however, assures us that, next to the Bible and St. Augustine, he can mention no book from which he has learned more of the nature of God, Christ, man and all other things, than from this work. When he forwarded a printed copy of the first

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 110 f.
[2] Preface to his first edition: "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 153.

edition to Spalatin (December 14, 1516), he wrote, that Tauler offered a solid theology which was quite similar to the old; that he was acquainted with no theology more wholesome and evangelical. Spalatin should saturate himself with Tauler's sermons; "taste and see how sweet the Lord is, after you have first tasted and seen how bitter is everything that is ourselves."[1]

In addition to the authors mentioned, the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and of Gerard Groot, the founder of the Community of the Brethren of the Common Life, were known to him. That he was, or had been, fond of reading the writings of St. Bernard, we may guess from his many—often misunderstood—quotations from the same.

Luther was also well able, whilst under the influence of that inwardness which he loved so much in the mystics, to make his own their truly devotional and often moving language.

In a friendly letter he comforts, as follows, an Augustinian at Erfurt, Georg Leiffer, regarding his spiritual troubles: "The Cross of Christ is distributed throughout the whole world and each one gets a small piece of it. Do not throw yours away, but lay it, like a sacred relic, in a golden shrine, i.e. in a heart filled with gentle charity. For even the wrongs which we suffer from men, persecutions, passion and hatred, which are caused us either by the wicked or by those who mean well, are priceless relics, which have not indeed, like the wood of the cross, been hallowed by contact with our Lord's body, but which have been blessed by His most loving heart, encompassed by His friendly, Divine Will, kissed and sanctified. The curse becomes a blessing, insult becomes righteousness, suffering becomes an aureole, and the cross a joy. Farewell, sweet father and brother, and pray for me."

5. Excerpts from the Earliest Letters

The above letter of Luther's is one of the few remaining which belong to that transitic riod in his life. His letters are naturally not devoid of traces of the theological change which was going forward within him, and they may therefore be considered among the precursors of his future doctrine.

His new theological standpoint is already apparent in the charitable and sympathetic letter of encouragement which, as Rural Vicar, he sent to one of his brother monks about that time. "Learn, my sweet brother," he writes to George Spenlein, an Augustinian of the monastery of Memmingen, "learn Christ and Him Crucified, learn to sing to Him, and, despairing of your own self, say to Him: Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, but I am

[1] "Correspondence," 1, p. 75.

Thy sin ; Thou hast accepted what I am and given me what Thou art ; Thou hast thus become what Thou wast not, and what I was not I have received. . . . Never desire," he exhorts him, " a purity so great as to make you cease thinking yourself, nay being, a sinner ; for Christ dwells only in sinners ; He came down from heaven where He dwells in the righteous in order to live also in sinners. If you ponder upon His love, then you will become conscious of His most sweet consolation. What were the use of His death had we to attain to peace of conscience by our own trouble and labour ? Therefore only in Him will you find peace through a trustful despair of yourself and your works."[1]

A similar mystical tone (we are not here concerned with the theology it implied) shows itself also here and there in Luther's later correspondence. The life of public controversy in which he was soon to engage was certainly not conducive to the peaceful, mystical tone of thought and to the cultivation of the interior spirit ; as might have been expected, the result of the struggle was to cast his feeling and his mode of thought in a very different mould. It was impossible for him to become the mystic some people have made him out to be owing to the distractions and excitement of his life of struggle.[2]

In the above letter to Spenlein, Luther speaks of this monk's relations to his brethren. Spenlein had previously been in the monastery at Wittenberg, where Luther had known him as a zealous monk, much troubled about the details of the Rule, and who even found it difficult to have to live with monks who were less exact in their observance. " When you were with us," says the writer, " you were under the impression, or rather in the error in which I also was at one time held captive, and of which I have not even now completely rid myself (' *nondum expugnavi* '), that it is necessary to perform good works until one is confident

[1] Letter of April 8, 1516, " Briefwechsel," 1, p. 29. (De Wette dates it April 7.)

[2] " Luther never became by his diligent study of Tauler a mystic in the strict sense of the word. He makes his own merely the language of mysticism. He often uses the same expressions as Tauler, but with another meaning, indeed he even unconsciously imputes to Tauler his own views," H. Böhmer, " Luther im Lichte der neueren Forschung," Leipzig, 1906, p. 35 (omitted in the 2nd edition, 1910).

of being able to appear before God decked out, as it were, in deeds and merits, a thing which is utterly impossible." Luther is desirous of hearing what Spenlein now thinks, "whether he has not at last grown sick of self-righteousness and learnt to breathe freely and trust in the righteousness of Christ." "If, however, you believe firmly in the righteousness of Christ—and cursed be he who does not—then you will be able to bear with careless and erring brothers patiently and charitably; you will make their sins your own," as Christ does with ours, "and in whatever good you do, in that you will allow them to participate . . . be as one of them and bear with them. To think of flight and solitude, and to wish to be far away from those who we think are worse than ourselves, that is an unhappy righteousness. . . . On the contrary, if you are a lily and a rose of Christ, then remember that you must be among thorns, and beware of becoming yourself a thorn by impatience, rash judgment and secret pride. . . . If Christ had willed to live only amongst the good or to die only for His friends, for whom, pray, would He ever have died, or with whom would He have lived?"

Spenlein was then no longer living in a monastery subject to the Rural Vicar. It is even probable that he had left Wittenberg and the new Vicar's district on account of differences of opinion on the matter of Observance. He betook himself to the imperial city of Memmingen, presumably because a different spirit prevailed in the monastery there. This would seem to explain how Luther came to speak to this doubtless most worthy religious of "unhappy righteousness," interpreting the state of the case in his own perverse fashion.

Among the other letters despatched in 1516 that to Lang at Erfurt deserves special attention; in it Luther expresses himself in confidence, quite openly, on the disapproval of his work and of his theological standpoint which was showing itself at Wittenberg and at Erfurt.[1]

His study of St. Augustine had put him in a position to recognise, on internal grounds, that a work, "On true and false penance," generally attributed to this African Father, was not really his. He tells his friend that his opinion of the book had "given great offence to all"; though the insipid contents of the same were so far removed from the spirit of Augustine, yet it

[1] September (?), 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 54 ff.

was esteemed because it had been quoted and employed by Gratian and Peter Lombard as one of Augustine's works. That he had been aware of this and nevertheless had stood up for the truth, that was his crime, which had aroused the enmity particularly of Dr. Carlstadt; not, however, that he cared very much; both Lombard and Gratian had done much harm to consciences by means of this stupid book.

His opinion regarding the spuriousness of the work was in the end generally accepted, even, for instance, by Bellarmine; Trithemius, moreover, had been of the same opinion before Luther's time; in his attacks on its contents, however, Luther, led astray by his false ideas of penance, exceeded all bounds, and thus vexed, beyond measure, his colleagues who at that time still held the opposite view.

According to this letter, he had also challenged all the critics of his new ideas in a disputation held by one of his pupils under his direction. "They barked and screeched at me on account of my lectures, but their mouths were to be stopped and the opinions of others heard." It was a question of defending his erroneous doctrine, regarding the absolute helplessness of nature, which he had meantime formulated, and to which we shall return immediately. In consequence, he says, all the "Gabrielists" (i.e. followers of the scholastic Gabriel Biel) here, as well as in the Faculty at Erfurt, were nonplussed. But I know my Gabriel quite as well as his own wonderful, wonderstruck worshippers; "he writes well, but as soon as he touches on grace, charity, hope, and faith, then, like Scotus his leader, he treads in the footprints of Pelagius." Luther was quite free to dissent from the view, even of so good a professor as Biel, in this question of grace and virtue, but, already at that time, he had denounced as Pelagian several doctrines of the Church. Among those who were angered was the theologian Nicholas von Amsdorf, who took his licentiate at the same time as Luther, and became later on his close friend. Amsdorf secretly sent one of Luther's theses, of which he disapproved, to Erfurt, but afterwards allowed himself to be pacified.

The humanistic tendency which was at that time beginning to make its way had, as we see from the letters, little part in the rise of the Lutheran movement at Wittenberg.

The view that Luther's new teaching was due to the direct influence of the mode of thought of such men as Hutten, Crotus and Mutian is incorrect. On the contrary, Luther, full as he was of his one-sided supra-naturalism, was bound to disapprove of the Humanist ideal and made no secret of his disapproval. In his letters in 1516 he also found fault with the satirical and frivolous attacks of the Humanists on the state of the Church and the theological learning of the day. He considered the "*Epistolæ obscurorum virorum*"

impudent, and called the author a clown.[1] A similar work by the same group of Humanists against the "Theologasters," entitled "*Tenor supplicationis Pasquillianæ*" —as he informs Spalatin, himself a Humanist—he had held up to the ridicule of his colleagues, as it richly deserved on account of the invective and slanders which it contained.[2]

He appealed to Spalatin to draw the attention of Erasmus to his misapprehension of righteousness as it appears in the Epistle to the Romans; he says that Erasmus overrates the virtues of heathen heroes, whereas even the most blameless of men, even Fabricius and Regulus, were miles away from righteousness; outside of faith in Christ there is, according to him, no righteousness whatever; Aristotle, whom everybody follows, likewise knew nothing of this righteousness; but Paul and Augustine teach it; what Paul calls self-righteousness is not merely, as Erasmus says, a righteousness founded on the observances of the Mosaic Law, but any righteousness whatever which springs out of works, or out of the observance of any law; Paul also teaches original sin in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, a fact which Erasmus wrongly denies. With regard to Augustine, he could unfold to him (Erasmus) St. Paul's meaning better than he thinks, but he should diligently read the writings against the Pelagians, above all the *De Spiritu et littera*. Augustine there takes a firm stand on the foundation of the earlier Fathers (Luther's quotations from his authorities show how much the study had fascinated him). But after Augustine's day, dead literalism became the general rule. Lyra's Bible Commentary, for instance, is full of it; the right interpretation of Holy Scripture is also wanting in Faber Stapulensis, notwithstanding his many excellencies. Hence, he writes, we must fall back on Augustine, on Augustine rather than on Jerome to whom Erasmus gives the preference in Bible matters, for Jerome keeps too much to the historical side; he recommends Augustine not merely because he is an Augustinian monk, for formerly he himself did not think him worthy of consideration until he "fell in" (*incidissem*) with his books.[3]

Augustine's "On the Spirit and the Letter," a work dedicated to Marcellinus, and dating from the end of 412, with which Luther had become acquainted in 1515, had a lasting influence on him. In this book the great Doctor of the Church strikes at the very root of Pelagianism and shows the necessity, for the accomplishment of supernatural good works ("*facere et perficere*

[1] To Spalatin, about October 5, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 62.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] To Spalatin, October 19, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 63. Spalatin took his advice, as his letter to Erasmus ("Opp. Erasmi," ed. Lugd. Bat., 3, col. 1579 *sq.*) shows. The letter is also printed in "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 65.

bonum"), of inward grace which he calls "*spiritus*" in contradistinction to outward grace which he terms "*littera.*" Luther, however, referred this necessity more and more to everything good, even to what is purely natural, hence his loud accusations soon after against the theology of the Church as savouring of Pelagianism.

Humanism at that time stood for a Pelagian view of life and therefore could not be altogether sympathetic to Luther. Its influence on him, especially in his youth, cannot, however, be altogether disregarded; he had been brought into too close contact with it in his student days and also during his theological course at Erfurt, and his mind was too lively and too open to the currents of the time for him not to have felt something of its effects. The very extravagance of his criticism of things theological may, in part, be traced back to the example of the Humanists.

From Luther's lectures on the Psalms, as well as from his sermons and letters till 1516 inclusive, we have adduced various elements which may be considered to forebode the greater and more important change yet to come. They are, indeed, not exactly precursors of what one designates usually as the Reformation, but rather of the new Lutheran theology which was responsible for that upheaval in the ecclesiastical, ethical and social sphere which became known as the Reformation.

6. The Theological Goal

Before continuing in a more systematic form the examination of the origin of Luther's new theology, of which we have just seen some of the antecedents, we must cast a glance at the erroneous theological result which Luther had already reached in 1515–16, and which must be considered as the goal of his actual development.

Several of the above passages, from sermons and letters of the years 1515–16, have already in part betrayed the result. It appears, however, in full in the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans delivered between the autumn, 1515, and the summer, 1516, already several times referred to.[1] Everyone who has followed the course of Luther research during the last decade will recall the commotion aroused when Denifle announced the discovery in the Vatican Library of a copy hitherto unknown of Luther's youthful work (Palat. 1826). Much labour has since been expended in connection with the numerous passages quoted from it by this scholar. A popular Protestant history of dogma even attempted to arrange Denifle's quotations so as to form with

[1] See below, chapter vi., p. 1 ff.

them a complete picture.[1] Meanwhile a complete edition of the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans has been brought out by Johann Ficker which will serve as the foundation for a proper treatment of the new material. It may, however, be of interest, and serve to recall the literary movement of the last few years, if we here sum up Luther's errors of 1516 according to the extracts from the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans adduced by Denifle. The present writer, on the ground of his study of the Vatican copy undertaken previous to the appearance of Ficker's edition, can assure the reader that the extracts really give the kernel of the lectures. Some additions which he then noted as elucidating Denifle's excerpts are given in the notes according to the MS. and alongside of the quotations from Denifle; everywhere, however, Ficker's new edition has also been quoted, reference being made to the scholia, or to the glosses, on the Epistle to the Romans, according as the passages are taken from the one or the other part of Luther's Commentary.

The Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans really represents the first taking shape of Luther's heretical views. From the very beginning he expresses some of them without concealment. It is clear that during his preparation for these lectures in the summer and early autumn of 1515 things within him had reached a climax, and, overcoming all scruples, he determined to take the decisive step of laying the result of his new and quite peculiar views before his audience at the University. At the very commencement his confident theses declare that the commentator will deduce everything from Paul, and as we proceed we see more and more clearly how his immersion in his mistaken interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans —that deep well of apostolic teaching—led him to propound the false doctrines born of his earlier antipathy for Scholasticism and liking for pseudo-mysticism.

In the very first pages Luther endeavours to show how imputed righteousness is the principal doctrine advocated by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. Justification by faith alone and the new appreciation of works is expressed quite openly.

"God has willed to save us," this he represents as the sum total of the Epistle, "not by our own but by extraneous righteousness and wisdom, not by such as is in us or produced by our inner self, but by that which comes to us from elsewhere." "We

[1] H. Loofs, "Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengesch.," 4, 1906, p. 702 ff.

must rest altogether on an extraneous and foreign righteousness," he repeats, "and therefore destroy our own, i.e. our homely righteousness" ("*non per domesticam sed per extraneam iustitiam*," etc.).[1] So fascinated is he by the terrifying picture of self-righteousness and holiness by works, that he is more than inclined to weaken the inclination for good works, though he indeed declares them necessary: according to him they produce in man a self-consciousness which prevents him regarding himself as unrighteous and as needing the justification of Christ. The truly righteous, such are his actual words, always believe "that they are sinners . . . they sigh until they are completely cured of concupiscence, a release which takes place at death." Everyone must be distrustful even of his good intentions, he tells his adversaries, i.e. "those who trust in themselves, who, thinking they are in possession of God's grace, cease to prove themselves, and sink daily into greater lukewarmness." He asks ironically whether "they acted from the pure love of God," for now, erroneously, he will allow only the purest love of God as a motive.[2] He writes: "he who thinks, that the greater his works, the more sure he is of salvation shows himself to be an unbeliever, a proud man and a contemner of the word. It does not depend at all on the multitude of works [in the right sense this was admitted by the old theologians]; it is nothing but temptation to pay any attention to this." It is mere "wisdom of the flesh," he thinks, for anyone to pay attention to the "difference of works" rather than to the word, particularly the inward word and its impulses.[3]

Here in his mystical language he states the following paradoxical thesis: "the wisdom of the spiritually minded knows neither good nor evil ("*prudentia spiritualium neque bonum neque malum scit*"); it keeps its eyes fixed always on the word, not on the work."[4] He concludes: "let us only close our eyes, listen in simplicity to the word, and do what it commands whether it be foolish or evil or great or small" ("*sive stultum sive malum, sive magnum sive parvum præcipiat, hoc faciamus*").[5] As righteousness does not proceed from works we must so much the more cling to imputation. "Our works are nothing, we find in ourselves nothing but thoughts which accuse us . . . where

[1] "Cod. Vat. Palat. 1826," fol. 77; Denifle, 1^2, "Quellenbelege," p. 313 f.; "Scholia to Romans" (Ficker), p. 2.

[2] Fol. 121′ and 122. "Scholia to Rom.," p. 73: "(*Iusti*) *gemunt et implorant gratiam Dei . . . credunt semper, se esse peccatores. . . . Sic humiliantur sic plorant, sic gemunt, donec perfecte sanentur, quod fit in morte. . . . Si dixerimus quod peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos seducimus* (1 Io., i. 8). . . . *Confisi se iam habere gratiam Dei omittunt sua secreta rimari, tepescunt cotidie*," etc. The passage is a continuation of that quoted by Denifle-Weiss, "Luther," 1^2, p. 463, n. 10, and makes the latter appear in a different sense somewhat more favourable to the righteous.

[3] Fol. 230 ff. "Scholia to Rom.," p. 241 f., in Denifle, 1^2, "Quellenbelege," p. 329.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, "Scholia to Rom.," p. 243.

shall we find defenders ? Nowhere but in Christ . . . the heart, it is true, reproves a man for his evil works, it accuses him and witnesses against him. But he who believes in Christ turns at once [from himself] to Christ and says : He has done enough, He is righteous, He is my defence, He died for me, He has made His righteousness mine and my sin His. But if He has made my sin His, then it is no longer mine and I am free. If He has made His righteousness mine, then I am righteous through the same righteousness as He."[1]

Here then the sinner, as Luther teaches in his letter to Spenlein (see above, p. 88 ff.), simply casts himself upon Christ and hides himself just as he is "under the wings of the hen" (p. 80), comforting himself with the doctrine of imputation. The old Church, on the contrary, not only pointed to the merits of Christ (see above, pp. 10, 18) but also to the exhortations of St. Paul where he calls for zealous, active co-operation with the Divine grace, for inward conversion in the spirit, for works of penance and for purification from sin by contrition in order that our reconciliation with God and real pardon may become possible. Hence, while the Catholic doctrine conceives of justification as an interior, organic process, Luther is beginning to take it as something exterior and mechanical, as a process which results from the pushing forward of a foreign righteousness, as if it were a curtain. He turns away from the Catholic doctrine according to which a man justified by a living and active faith is really incorporated in Christ as the shoot is grafted into the olive tree, or the branch on the vine, i.e. to a new life, to an interior ennobling through sanctifying grace and the infused supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity.

Nevertheless Luther himself was affrighted at the theory of faith alone, and imputation. He feared lest he should be reproached with setting good works aside with his doctrine of imputed merit. He therefore explains in self-defence that he did not desire a bare faith ; "the hypocrites and the lawyers" thought they would be saved by such a faith, but according to Paul's words a faith was requisite by which we "approach Christ" ("*per quem habemus accessum per fidem*," Rom. v. 2). Those are therefore in error who go forward in Christ with overgreat certainty, but not by faith ; as though they would be saved by Christ, for not doing anything themselves and giving no sign of faith. These possess too much faith, or, better still, none at all. Both must exist : "by faith" and "by Christ" ; we must do and suffer gladly all that we can in the faith of Christ, and yet account ourselves in all things unprofitable servants, and only through Christ alone think ourselves able to go to God. For the

[1] Fol. 104. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 465, n. 1 ; "Schol. to Rom.," p. 44. Cp. the passage fol. 152 Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 527, n. 1 ; "Schol. to Rom.," p. 121, where Luther's addition, omitted by Denifle, sums up everything : "*Ideo omnes in iniquitate id est iniustitia nascimur, morimur, sola autem reputatione miserentis Dei per fidem verbi eius iusti sumus.*"

object of works of faith is to make us worthy of Christ and of the refuge and protection of His righteousness."[1] With this is connected Luther's insistence on the necessity of invoking God's grace in order that we may be able to fight against our passions and to bring forth good works, and in order that the passions, which in themselves are sin, may not be imputed by God.[2] Thus can "the body of sin be destroyed" and the "old man overcome."[3] Luther admits, though with hesitation and in contradiction with himself, works which prepare us for justification.[4]

In spite of everything, in this first stage of his development, justification appears to him uncertain. He declares in so many words: "We cannot know whether we are justified and whether we believe"; and he can only add rather lamely: "we must look upon our works as works of the Law and be, in humility, sinners, hoping only to be justified through the mercy of Christ."[5] He has no "joyful assurance of salvation"—which, in fact, had no place

[1] Fol. 159. "Schol. to Rom.," p. 132, where he reproves those "*qui nimium securi incedunt per Christum, non per fidem, quasi sic per Christum salvandi sint, ut ipsi nihil operentur, nihil exhibeant de fide. Hi nimiam habent fidem, immo nullam. Quare utrumque fieri oportet 'per fidem,' 'per Christum,' ut in fide Christi, omnia, quæ possumus, faciamus atque patiamur; et tamen iis omnibus servos inutiles nos agnoscamus, per Christum solum sufficientes nos confidamus ad accessum Dei. Omnibus enim operibus fidei id agitur, ut Christo et iustitiæ eius refugio ac protectione digni efficiamur.*"

[2] Fol. 190. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 518, n. 1; "Schol. Rom.," p. 165 f.

[3] Fol. 173. "Schol. Rom.," p. 156, he says of the text: "*ut destruatur corpus peccati*" (Rom. vi. 6): "*Destrui corpus peccati est concupiscentias carnis et veteris hominis frangi laboribus pœnitentiæ et crucis, ac sic de die in diem minui eas ac mortificari, ut Col.* iii. (v. 5). '*Mortificate membra vestra, quæ sunt super terram.*' *Sicut ibidem clarissime describit utrunque hominem novum et veterem.*"

[4] Fol. 100 and 100′. "Schol. Rom.," p. 38 f.; Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 44, n. 1, where, however (line 9), the Vatican copy reads rightly "*potuit*," not "*oportuit*"; line 11 should read "*summum ens, quod.*" Both are correct in Ficker. The words "*legem impleverunt,*" line 15, really belong to another passage.

[5] Fol. 132′. To supplement the quotation (Denifle-Weiss, 1, p. 468), which is incompletely quoted, I have taken from the Vatican MS. (Ficker, "Scholia to Rom.," p. 89) the following: "*Qui autem sic timuerit et humiliter confessus fuerit, dabitur ei gratia ut iustificetur et dimittatur peccatum, si quid forte per occultam et ignoratam incredulitatem fecerit. Sic Iob verebatur omnia opera sua. Et Apostolus non sibi conscius fuit, et tamen non in hoc se iustificatum putat. Ac per hoc soli Christo iustitia relinquitur, soli ipsi opera gratiæ et spiritus; nos autem semper in operibus legis, semper iniusti, semper peccatores, secundum illud Ps.* xxxi. (v. 6): '*Pro hac orabit ad te omnis sanctus.*'" There follows an invective against the proud man: "*qui se credere putat et omnem fidem possidere perfecte.*"

whatever in the new teaching as expounded by Luther himself—and its name is always drowned by the loud cry of sin. Even saints, on account of the sin which still clings to them, do not know whether they are pleasing to God. If they are well advised, they beg solely for the forgiveness of their sin which lies like lead on their conscience. "That is," the mystic explains, "the wisdom which is hidden in secret" ("*abscondita in mysterio*"), because our righteousness "being entirely dependent on God's decree remains unknown to us."[1]

Luther cannot assure us sufficiently often that man is nothing but sin, and sins in everything. His reason is that concupiscence remains in man after baptism. This concupiscence he looks upon as real sin, in fact it is the original sin, enduring original sin, so that original sin is not removed by baptism, remains obdurate to all subsequent justifying grace,[2] and, until death, can, at the utmost, only be diminished. He says expressly, quite against the Church's teaching, that original sin is only covered over in baptism, and he tries to support this by a misunderstood text from Augustine and by misrepresenting Scholasticism.[3]

Augustine teaches with clearness and precision in many passages that original sin is blotted out by baptism and entirely remitted;[4] Luther, however, quotes him to the opposite effect. The passage in question occurs in *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* (l., c. xxv., n. 28) where Luther makes this Father say: sin (*peccatum*) is forgiven in baptism, not so that it no longer remains, but that it is no longer imputed.[5] Whereas what Augustine actually says is: the concupiscence of the flesh is forgiven, etc. ("*dimitti concupiscentiam carnis non ut non sit, sed ut in peccatum non imputetur*"). And yet Luther was acquainted with the true reading of the passage—which is really opposed to his view—as he had annotated it in the margin of the Sentences of Peter Lombard, where it is correctly given.[6] Luther, after having thus

[1] Fol. 154. "Scholia Rom.," p. 124. The saints begged for forgiveness because in them "*peccatum manifestum est cum ipsis, apud se ipsos et in conscientia sua. . . . Ne desperent misericordiam in Christo invocant et ita exaudiuntur. Hæc est sapientia abscondita in mysterio.*" He concludes: our righteousness is unknown to us, "*quia in ipso et consilio eius (Dei) tota pendet.*"

[2] Passages in Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 470 ff.; p. 482 ff. Cp. p. 442 ff.

[3] Fol. 144'. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 455, n. 4, and p. 482, n. 3; "Schol. Rom.," p. 108 ff.

[4] Cp. Denifle, 1, p. 457 ff.

[5] "Scholia to Rom.," p. 109.

[6] "Werke," Weim. ed., 9, p. 75.

twisted the passage as above, employs if frequently later.[1] In the original lecture on the Epistle to the Romans he has, it is true, added to the text, after the word "*peccatum*," the word "*concupiscentia*," as the new editor points out, in excuse of Luther.[2] But on the preceding page Luther adds in exactly the same way in two passages of his own text where he speaks of "*peccatum*," the word "*concupiscentia*," so that his addition to Augustine cannot be regarded as a mere correction of a false citation, all the less since the incorrect form is found unaltered elsewhere in his writings.[3]

As regards Scholasticism, Luther holds that its teaching on original sin was very faulty, because it "dreamt" that original sin, like actual sin, was entirely removed (by baptism).[4] This is one of his first attacks on a particular doctrine of Scholasticism, his earlier opposition having been to Scholasticism in general. The blame he here administers presupposes the truth of his view that concupiscence and original sin come under the same category, and that the former is culpable. Almost all the Scholastics had made the essence of original sin to consist in the loss of original justice, whilst allowing that its "*materiale*," as they called it, lay in concupiscence, so that without any "dream" it was quite easy to conceive of original sin as blotted out, while the "*materiale*" or "*fomes peccati*" or concupiscence remained.[5] Other examples of how Luther, partly owing to his ignorance of true Scholasticism, came to bring the most glaring charges against that school, will be given later.

Actual sins remain, according to Luther, even after forgiveness, for they too are only covered over. Formerly, it is true, he admits having believed that repentance and the sacrament of penance removed everything ("*omnia ablata putabam et evacuata, etiam intrinsece*"), and therefore in his madness he had thought himself better after confession than those who had not confessed.[6] "Thus I struggled with myself, not knowing that whilst forgiveness is certainly true, yet there is no removal of sin."

[1] Thus "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, pp. 414 and 731; 4, p. 691; 7, pp. 110 and 344; 8, p. 93. "Werke," Erl. ed., 15, p. 54; 16, p. 141; 63, p. 131; "Tischreden," ed. Förstemann, 2, p. 42; 4, p. 391; etc. Cp. Denifle, 1, p. 461. He may in time have come to believe the words were really Augustine's.

[2] Ficker, p. xli. and xxix.

[3] Cp. Denifle, 1, p. 457 ff., on the whole question; he also points out two other falsifications of Augustine's views committed by Luther.

[4] "Schol. Rom.," p. 108.

[5] Cp. Denifle, 1, pp. 458, 502 ff.

[6] Fol. 144'. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 455, n. 4; "Schol. Rom.," p. 109. The continuation of this passage, which is not without importance, is: "*Ita mecum pugnavi, nesciens quod remissio quidem vera sit, sed tamen non sit ablatio peccati.*"

Not only does real sin continue to dwell in man through concupiscence, but, according to a further statement of Luther, the keeping of God's law is impossible to man. "As we cannot keep God's commandments we are really always in unrighteousness, and therefore there remains nothing for us but to fear and to beg for remission of the unrighteousness, or rather that it may not be imputed, for it is never altogether remitted, but remains and requires the act of non-imputation.[1]

But how, then, he must have asked himself in following out the train of thought of his new system, if, owing to the depravity of human nature as the result of original sin there remains in man no freedom in the choice of good? "Where does the freedom of the will come in?" he asks, as it follows from the Apostle's teaching that "the keeping of the law is simply impossible" ("*sæpius dixi, simpliciter esse impossibile legem implere?*").[2] He hesitates, it is true, to deny free will, but only for a moment, and then tells us boldly that the will has been robbed of its freedom (of choosing) good. "Had I said this, people would curse me," but, according to him, it is St. Paul who advocates the doctrine that without grace there is no freedom of the will in the choice of good which can please God.[3] Here we have a foretaste of the doctrine Luther was to express at the Leipzig disputation and elsewhere, viz. that the freedom of the will for good is merely a name ("*res de solo titulo*"),[4] and of that later terrible thesis of his that free will in general is dead ("*liberum arbitrium est mortuum*"),[5] a thesis he defended more particularly against Erasmus.

The young Monk was thus prepared to admit all the consequences of his new ideas, whereas the Apostle Paul, more particularly in his Epistle to the Romans, recognises

[1] Fol. 153′. "Schol. Rom.," p. 124: "*Igitur ex quo Dei præceptum implere non possumus ac per hoc semper iniusti merito sumus, nihil restat,* [*quam*] *ut iudicium semper timeamus et pro remissione iniustitiæ, immo pro nonimputatione oremus; quia nunquam remittitur omnino, sed manet et indiget non imputatione.*" Of the true Catholic doctrine, *re* the inability of man and God's grace, Denifle treats very well (1, pp. 416–27).

[2] Fol. 193. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 508, n. 1; "Schol. Rom.," p. 183.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] J. Köstlin, "Luthers Theologie," 1^2, p. 215. Cp. 2, p. 124.

[5] Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 509; Köstlin, 2^2, p. 50, quotes, amongst others, Luther's later thesis that mere human reason can only take for good what is evil.

the ability of man for natural goodness, and speaks of the law of nature in the heathen world and the possibility and actuality of its observance. "They do by nature the things of the law" (Rom. ii. 14). Luther will only allow that they do such things by means of grace, and the word grace again he uses merely for the grace of justification. His opinion with regard to the virtues of the heathen sages is noteworthy. He says that the philosophers of olden time had to be damned, although they may have been virtuous from their very inmost soul ("*ex animo et medullis*"), because they had at least experienced some self-satisfaction in their virtue, and, in consequence of the sinfulness of nature, must necessarily have succumbed to sinful love of self.[1] Not long after, i.e. as early as 1517, he declares in his MS. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews their virtues to be merely vices ("*revera sunt vitia*").[2]

But what place is given to the virtues of the righteous in Christianity? "As even the righteous man is depraved by sin he cannot be inwardly righteous without the mercy of God. . . . In the believers and in those who sigh unrighteousness is absent only because Christ comes to their assistance with the fulness of His sinlessness, and covers over their imperfections."[3] Even when we "do good, we sin" ("*bene operando peccamus*"), so runs his paradoxical thesis; "but Christ covers over what is wanting and does not impute it." And why do we always sin in doing good? "Because owing to concupiscence and sensuality we do not perform the good with the intensity and purity of intention which the law demands, i.e. not with all our might ('*ex omnibus viribus*,' Luke x. 27), the desires of the flesh being too strong."[4] The Church, on the other hand, teaches that good works done in the state of sanctifying grace are pleasing to God in spite of concupiscence, which, it is true, remains after baptism and after the blotting out of original

[1] Fol. 77. Denifle, 1^2 "Quellenbelege," p. 313; "Schol. Rom.," p. 1.

[2] Fol. 75′. Vatican MS. of Commentary on Hebrews; Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 528, n. 2.

[3] Fol. 153′. "Rom. Schol.," p. 123: in the continuation of passage quoted by Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 503, n. 5: "*Non potest intus sine misericordia Dei iustus esse, quum sit fomite corruptus. . . . Quæ iniquitas non invenitur in credentibus et gementibus quia succurit eis Christus de plenitudine puritatis suæ et tegit eorum hoc imperfectum.*"

[4] Fol. 153. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 503, n. 5; "Schol. Rom.," p. 123.

sin which ensued, but which is not sinful so long as there is no consent to its enticements.

As regards the distinction between mortal and venial sin, we find Luther's doctrine has already reached its later standpoint, according to which there is no difference between them. In the same way he already denies the merit of good works. "It is clear," he writes, "that according to substance and nature venial sin does not exist, and that there is no such thing as merit."[1] All sins, in his opinion, are mortal, because even the smallest contains the deadly poison of concupiscence. With regard to merit, according to him, even "the saints have no merit of their own, but only Christ's merits."[2] Even in their actions the motive of perfect love was not sufficiently lively. "If it might be done unpunished and there were no expectation of reward, then even the good man would omit the good and do evil like the bad."[3]

With this pessimistic view of Luther's we conclude our preliminary glance at the theological goal to which his development had led him. We will not at present pursue further the theme of pessimism which might be brought out more clearly in the light of the doctrine contained in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans regarding absolute predestination to hell, and resignation to hell as the highest act of virtue.[4] All the new doctrines we have passed in review may be regarded as forerunners of the great revolution soon to come; we see here in these questions of doctrine the utter lack of respect and the boldness which the originator of this revolutionary theology will, later on, manifest against the Church, when it became clear that, without being untrue to herself, she could not approve his teaching. Meanwhile the connection of these doctrines among themselves and with the coming world-historic movement calls for further elucidation. We need offer no excuse for attempting this in detail in the following pages.

[1] Fol. 153. "Schol. Rom.," p. 123: "*Patet quod nullum est peccatum veniale ex substantia et natura sua sed nec meritum.*"

[2] Fol. 153′. "Schol. Rom.," p. 124: "*Dicis, ut quid ergo merita sanctorum adeo prædicantur. Respondeo, quod non sunt eorum merita, sed Christi in eis.*"

[3] Fol. 121, 121′; Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 453; "Schol. Rom.," p. 73 f.

[4] On Predestination see below, chapter vi. 2.

The history of Luther's development has passed into the foreground of literary interest by reason of the works which have appeared within the last few years, and, owing to the numerous sources and particular studies recently published, the historian is now in the fortunate position of being able to offer a sure solution of much that has hitherto been doubtful on a subject which has always exercised, and doubtless will continue to exercise, people's minds.

CHAPTER III

THE STARTING-POINT

1. Former Inaccurate Views

The views formerly current with regard to the origin of Luther's struggle against the old Church were due to an insufficient knowledge of history, and might be ignored were it not that their after effects still remain in literature.

It will be sufficient to mention three of these views. It was said that the Church's teaching on Indulgences, and the practices of the Quæstors or Indulgence-preachers, first brought Luther into antagonism with the Church authorities and then gradually entangled him more and more in the great struggle regarding other erroneous teachings and usages. As a matter of fact, the question of Indulgences was raised only subsequent to Luther's first great departures from the Church's doctrine.

Then it was said that the far-seeing teacher of Wittenberg had from the very first directed his attention to the reformation of the whole Church, which he found sunk in abuses, and had therefore commenced with a doctrinal reform as a necessary preliminary. As though Luther—this is what this childish view presupposes—had before him from the beginning the plan of his whole momentous work, or sat down to draw up a general programme for the reformation of doctrine, commencing with the fall of Adam. We are to believe that the Monk at once severed all connecting ties with the whole of the past, in faith as well as in the practical conception of the Church's life; that he went through no previous long inward process, attended for him by a weary conflict of soul; that, in fact, such a world-stirring revolution had been dependent on the will of one man, and was not the result of the simultaneous action of many factors which had, at the outset, been ignored and not taken into consideration. The whole struggle for the "better-

ment of the Church" was a gradual development, and the co-operating elements led their originator, both in his teaching and his practical changes, far beyond what he had originally aimed at. When Luther, brooding over original sin, grace and justification, first began to set up his new ideas against the so-called self-righteous and "little Saints" of his immediate surroundings, he did, it is true, now and again speak excitedly of the reforms necessary to meet certain phases of the great decline in the public life of the Church; but the Doctor of Holy Scripture was, as a matter of fact, far more preoccupied with the question of the theology of Paul and Augustine than with the abuses in the Church and outer world, which were, to tell the truth, very remote from the Monk's cell and lecture-room.

The third view is also incorrect which has it that it was rivalry between two Orders, viz. dissatisfaction and envy on the part of the Augustinians against the Dominicans, which set the Monk on his career. The Augustinians, it was said,[1] were annoyed with the rival Order because the preaching of the Indulgence had been entrusted to its members and not rather to so capable a man as Luther. Notwithstanding the early date at which this charge was made, even by Luther's own contemporaries, the fact remains, that not only were there Augustinian Indulgence-preachers, as, for instance, Johann Paltz, but that Luther's erroneous teaching had already made its appearance before he had as yet commenced his struggle with Tetzel, and before he had even thought of the Dominicans Prierias and Cardinal Cajetan. Jealousy against his adversaries, the Dominicans, afterwards added fuel to the flame, but it was not the starting-point.

Moreover, in treating here of Luther's starting-point, we are not seeking to determine, as was the case with the

[1] Assertions in this sense lightly made by Cochlæus and Emser were accepted as true by later writers, such as Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius in his "*Confutatio prolegomenorum Brentii*"; thus the legend finds acceptance even among recent polemics. Emser only said, "he was now beginning to suspect" that Luther had come forward because there was "nothing to be made out of the indulgence business for you (Luther) or your party, and because Tetzel and his followers instead of your party were entrusted with the indulgence business." "*A venatione Luteriana Ægocerotis assertio*," fol. c., November, 1519. Cochlæus meant his accusation rather more seriously, but brings forward no proofs.

three views mentioned above, the origin and points of contact of the whole movement comprised under the name of the Reformation, but only of the first rise of Luther's new opinions on doctrine. These originated quite apart from any attempt at external reform of the Church, and were equally remote from the idea of breaking away from the Pope or of proclaiming freedom of belief or unbelief, though many have fancied that these were Luther's first aims.

Points of contact have been sought for not only in Humanism and its criticism of Church doctrine, but more particularly in the teaching and tenets of Hus, Luther's starting-point being traced back to his deep study of the writings of John Hus, which had ultimately led him to revive his errors; most of Luther's theses, so we are told, were merely a revival of Hus's teaching. This view calls for a closer examination than the others.

A priori we might easily fancy that he had been led to his teaching on the Church by means of the writings of Wiclif and Hus, for here we do find a great similarity. But it is precisely this teaching on the Church which is not to be found amongst his earlier errors; he reached his views on this subject only as a result of the conflict he had to wage, and, moreover, even then he brought them forward under varying aspects. Erasmus, it is true, thought it fair to say, not merely of his teaching on the Church, but of his teaching in general, that if "what he has in common with Wiclif and Hus be removed, there would not be much left."[1] Erasmus does not analyse Luther's assertions, otherwise he would certainly have experienced some difficulty in bringing out in detail his supposed dependence. We do not, however, deny that there may be some connection on certain points.

Luther himself is absolutely silent as regards having arrived at his ideas through Wiclif and Hus. He evidently considers himself quite independent. In his earlier years he even speaks very strongly against the Bohemian heretics and the Picards, as he frequently calls the Husites. In his

[1] "*Purgatio adv. epistolam non sobriam Lutheri*," 1532, p. 447, in "Erasmi Opp." t. 10, Lugd., Batav., 1706, p. 1555: "*Si tollas . . . quæ illi conveniunt cum I. Hus et I. Wiclevo aliisque nonnullis, fortasse non multum restabit, quo veluti proprio glorietur.*"

Commentary on the Psalms he regards them simply as heretics,[1] and in his lectures on the Epistle to the Romans he once instances the "*hæresis Pighardorum*" as an example of the wilful destruction of what is holy.[2] Later, however, at and after his public apostasy, and even shortly after the Leipzig Disputation, he defends some of Hus's doctrines, and the result of his perusal of Hus's work, "*De ecclesia*," was to make him more audacious in upholding the views it contains.[3] This quite explains the great sympathy with which he afterwards speaks of Hus and his writings in general, and the passionate way in which he blames the Catholic Church for having condemned him. He says in 1520: "In many parts of the German land there still survives the memory of John Hus, and, as it did not fade, I also took it up, and discovered that he was a worthy, highly enlightened man. . . . See, all ye Papists and Romanists," he cries, "whether you are able to undo one page of John Hus with all your writings."[4] That book of Hus's sermons which he found as a young student of theology in the monastery library at Erfurt (p. 25), he declares that he laid aside because it was by an arch-heretic, though he had found much good in it, and had been horrified that such a man had suffered death as a heretic; as he had at that time convinced himself, Hus interpreted Scripture powerfully and in a Christian manner.[5] We also know that Luther relates that Staupitz had told him of Proles, his predecessor, how he disapproved of Johann Zachariæ, one of the most capable opponents of Hus, and

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, pp. 292, 334. Cp. W. Köhler, "Luther und die Kirchengesch.," (1900), p. 168 f.

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 315.

[3] W. Köhler, *ibid.*, p. 225: "In his acquaintance with the sources Luther hardly rises above the average. Eck is superior to him in this point, for he deals with the various sources as an expert, which Luther never was. Emser also was not behind Luther . . . that Luther became acquainted with Hus's '*De Ecclesia*' at an earlier period than his friends and adversaries was due to the kindness of the Bohemians, not to his own zeal in research. His friends as well as his adversaries made haste to catch up with him again."

[4] "Concerning Eck's latest Bulls." "Werke," Erl. ed., 24^2, p. 28; Weim. ed., 6, p. 591. Cp. Luther's "Prefaces and epilogues to some letters of Hus" (1536 and 1537), "Werke," Erl. ed., 65, p. 59 ff., and "Opp. Lat. var.," 7, p. 536 *seq.*

[5] "Werke," Erl. ed., 65, p. 81. See W. Köhler, *ibid.*, p. 167: "We may well ask here whether the experience of later years does not come in as well."

that Staupitz had agreed: the latter also held that "Zachariæ had gone to the devil, but that Hus had been unfairly treated."[1] This opinion reinforces that of Grefenstein, mentioned above.[2] Nor does Luther, when speaking of his later development, ever admit having read Hus and other heretical books, or being in any way indebted to them. On the other hand, he tries always to place himself above Hus. What Hus, according to him, discovered was quite insignificant ("*minora et pauciora*"); he only commenced bringing the light which had in reality to come from him (Luther).[3] He only "reproved the abuses and the life of the Pope," he says on a later occasion, "but I put the knife to his throat, I oppose his existence and his teaching and make him merely equal to other bishops; that I did not do at first,"[4] i.e. I did not commence that way. It is certainly true that at the beginning he made no attempt to oppose the Papacy and the power of the Church.

At any rate, and this is what is most true in the above statements regarding Luther's connection with Hus, the feeling against Rome which Hus had stirred up, and the memory of the latter, proved of assistance to Luther when he came forward and brought him a speedier success; he himself says on one occasion: "It is a tradition among honest people that Hus suffered violence and injustice," and calls the belief that Hus was condemned by false judges "*robustissima*," so that no Pope, or Kaiser or University can shake it.[5]

Protestant biographers, as is well known, are fond of representing the inward process through which Luther went in the monastery, agreeably with his own descriptions in later years.[6] Unable to find peace of conscience and assurance of salvation in the "works" of his monastery life or of the Papacy, his one aim had been to arrive at the knowledge of a "merciful God," and for this purpose he had been obliged to unearth in Holy Scripture the long-forgotten

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 65, p. 80 f.; 24^2, p. 27 f.; Weim. ed., 6, p. 590 f.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 6, p. 591. See above, p. 25.

[3] Köhler, "Luther und die Kirchengesch.," p. 226, and "Opp. Lat. var.," 5, p. 216.

[4] "Coll.," ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 240 f.

[5] Cp. Köhler, p. 165 f., from "Werke," Weim. ed., 6, p. 185; *ibid.*, p. 223: "It is certain that Luther had read nothing of Wiclif's."

[6] "Werke," Erl. ed., 19^2, p. 152.

doctrine of justification by faith. Some Protestant writers dwell not so much upon his longing for certainty of salvation as upon his desire for virtue and true righteousness. "Oh, when wilt thou become pious and do enough?"[1] Others again complete the picture by laying stress upon his recognition of the concupiscence which is always reigning in man and which is sin, and of man's inability to keep the commandments; it was his recognition of this which "produced Luther's theology; his whole doctrine of justification culminated in the warfare against sin." All these descriptions are, however, based on an uncritical acceptance of Luther's later accounts of his life in religion, accounts plainly inspired by his polemic against the old Church, and intended to illustrate his false assertion that, in the cloister and in the Papacy, the way to obtain grace from God was utterly unknown.

Here we will mention only cursorily some of Luther's later statements, purporting to give a picture of his life as a monk.

To these belong the assertion that in the monastery he had not prayed with faith in Christ, because "no one knew anything" about Christ: that there the Saviour was known only as a strict Judge, and that he had therefore wished there were no Saviour: "I wished there had been no God." "None of us" believed at all that Christ was our Saviour, and, by dint of works, we "lost our baptism." We were always told: "Torment yourself in the monastery . . . whip yourself until you destroy your own sin; that was the teaching and faith of the Pope."[2] "It was a cursed life, full of malignity, was the life of that monkery."[3]

The apostate monk's object in all those statements regarding his interior or exterior experiences in the monastery was to strike at the Catholic Church.

We certainly cannot accept as historic the picture of religious practice, or malpractice, given in the following: whenever his eyes fell upon a figure of Christ, owing to his popish upbringing, he "would have preferred to see the devil rather than Christ"; he had thought "that he had been raised to the company of angels," but found he had really been "among devils"; he had "raged" in his search for comfort in Holy Scripture; he had also continuously suffered "a very great martyrdom and the taskmastership" of his conscience. "Self-righteousness" only had

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 19^2, p. 152.

[2] Denifle has shown from a large number of passages which Luther knew, that the Church at that time represented "God the Lord always as a merciful and gracious God, not as the stern judge" whom it was necessary "to propitiate by works" (Denifle, 1^2, p. 400 ff., pp. 420, 421).

[3] "Werke," Erl. ed., 49, p. 315.

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counted for anything; so great was it that he had been taught not to thank God for the Sacrament, but that God should thank him; but, notwithstanding all these errors, he had always sought after a "merciful God" and had at last found Him by coming to understand His gospel.

The birth and growth of this fable in the mind of Luther as he advanced in years will occupy us later. The present writer may point out, that no convincing answer has been given to the objections against the legend which he made public even prior to the appearance of Denifle's first volume,[1] and which were repeated therein independently, and at considerably greater length. On the Protestant side, too, much more caution is now being observed in the use of Luther's later descriptions of his own development, the tendency being to use contemporary sources instead. This is seen, for instance, in the studies by Braun on Luther's theory of concupiscence and by Hunzinger on Luther's mysticism, which will be quoted later.

In explanation of the inner process through which Luther went, the primary reason for his turning away from Catholic doctrine has been attributed by some Catholics to scrupulosity combined with an unhealthy self-righteousness, which by an inward reaction grew into carelessness and despair. How far this view is correct, and how far it requires to be supplemented by other important factors, will be shown further on.

Meanwhile another altogether too summary theory, a theory which overshoots the mark, must first be considered.

2. Whether Evil Concupiscence is Irresistible?

Formerly, and even in recent times, many writers on the Catholic side have endeavoured to prove that the principal motive for Luther's new opinions lay in worldliness, sensuality, and more especially sins of the flesh. In order to explain his teaching attempts were made to establish the closest connection between Luther's views with regard to the survival of sin in man without his consent, the covering over of man's guilt by the merits of Christ and the worthlessness of good works on the one hand, and on the other a nature ravaged by sinful habits, such as was attributed to the originator of these doctrines. The principal argument in favour of this view was found in the not unusual

[1] "Literar. Beilage" to the "Köln. Volksztg.," No. 44, October 29, 1903. "Luthers Selbstzeugnisse über seine Klosterzeit, eine Lutherlegende."

experience that intellectual errors frequently arise from moral faults. When, however, we come to examine Luther's character more narrowly, we at once perceive that other factors must be taken into consideration in his inward change, so that, in his case, it is not easy to decide how far his new ideas were produced under the pressure of his own sensuality. It was taken for granted that, owing to habitual moral faults, and through constant indulgence in the concupiscence of the flesh, he had been reduced to a state of utter inward degradation. Now, in point of fact, beyond what has been already quoted nothing can be found regarding his moral conduct previous to his change of view. No other circumstances are known concerning Luther than those already mentioned and those to be given later. It is true that history does not possess the all-seeing eye of Him who searches the heart and the reins; the sources containing information concerning the youth of Luther, before and after his profession, are also very inadequate; nevertheless, we must admit that the only arguments upon which the assertion of his great inward corruption could historically be based, namely, actual texts and facts capable of convincing anyone, are not forthcoming in the material at our command.[1]

[1] Various passages which are supposed to prove Luther's moral faults, or defects in his character, have simply been passed over in the above as insufficient. Thus what he says regarding his state in the monastery: "Even where it was only a question of a small temptation of death or sin, I fell" ("Werke," Erl. ed., 31, p. 279). This "fall," according to the context, does not refer to a yielding to the attacks of evil desires, but the ostensible melting away of his trust in a merciful God. It is quite apparent that "a temptation of death" cannot be understood in the former, but only in the latter sense. Luther once says that the doctrine that sin is expelled all at once and that grace is infused also all at once in justification drives a man to despair, as his own experience teaches; for it is clear that sin dwells in the heart together with good, anger with mildness, sensuality with chastity ("Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 664; "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 73 *seq.*); but he refers this whole explanation not to actual giving way to concupiscence, but simply to the inevitable continuance of concupiscence in the righteous, which he, it is true, calls sin. We may also mention here the text wrongly quoted in which, as a proof of his haughty bearing, speaking of a certain theological interpretation, he says: "*legi mille auctores*," though he was then but a young man ("Werke," Weim. ed., 9, p. 62; gloss to the Sentences). What he really says is: "*lege mille auctores*," i.e. you will not find it otherwise in a thousand writers; the "*legi*" is only a misprint.

The statement which has been quoted as a proof of the self-deception which his pride engendered in him, viz. that God had placed him in his

If Luther did actually teach the fatal invincibility of concupiscence (of this we shall have more to say later), yet he might well have arrived at this view by some other way than that of constant falls and the abiding experience of his own weakness and sinfulness. It is at least certain that sad personal experience is not the only thing which gives rise to grave errors of judgment.

Nor does the manner in which Luther represents concupiscence prove his own inward corruption. He does not make it to consist merely in the concupiscence of the flesh, and when he says that it is impossible to conquer concupiscence he is not thinking merely of this. When he speaks of concupiscence, and of a "*fomes peccati*" in man, he usually means concupiscence in the wide theological sense, i.e. as the attraction to every transgression which flatters our imperfect and evil nature, in particular to selfishness, as the centre around which clusters all that is sinful—pride, hatred, sensuality, etc.

Luther certainly teaches, even at the outset, as we shall point out later, that the will of man, by Adam's Fall, has lost in our ruined nature even the power to work anything that is good or pleasing to God, and therefore that it is impossible for man, in his own strength, to withstand sin and its lusts.

But he does not bring forward this doctrine under circumstances and in words which give us to understand that he was guided by the intention of showing any indulgence to concupiscence; on the contrary, he would like to encourage everyone to oppose concupiscence by means of grace and faith. Numerous texts might be quoted which clearly show this to have been the case.

In what sense then does he allow the irresistibility of concupiscence? We shall find the answer in what follows.

office as one quite "invincible," rests on a similar misprint. Instead of "*invictissimum*," as in Enders ("Briefwechsel," 1, p. 21), we should read "*invitissimum*," according to W. Walther's correct rendering, and the idea is one which often recurs in Luther, viz. that God had called him to the office in spite of his disinclination. Nor can his want of the spirit of prayer be proved by his statement that he often followed the office with so much distraction that "the Psalm or the Hour (Hore) was ended before I noticed whether I was at the beginning or in the middle" ("Werke," Erl. ed., 23, p. 22). If he were speaking of voluntary inattention, that would be something different, but the imagination of one so much occupied as he was might well be greatly distracted quite unintentionally.

He frequently expresses the truth, taught by faith and experience alike, regarding the continuance of concupiscence in man, even in the most perfect, and he does so in terms so strong that he seems to make concupiscence invincible. We can also see that he has a lively sense of the burden of concupiscence, that he cherishes a certain gloomy distrust of God's readiness to come to man's assistance—a distrust connected with his temptations on predestination—and that he undervalues the helps which the Church offers against evil desires. Finally, he sees in the very existence of concupiscence a culpable offence against the Almighty, and declares that, without grace, man is an unhappy prisoner, who in consequence of original sin is in the fullest sense incapable of doing what is good.

In his Commentary on the Psalms (1512–15–16) he still, it is true, upholds the natural freedom of man as opposed to his passions. In the Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (1515–16), and frequently in the sermons of that period, he indeed sacrifices this freedom, but even there he insists that the grace of God will in the end secure the victory to those who seek aid and pray humbly, and he also instances some of the means which, with the efficacious assistance of God, may help to victory in the religious life. To this later standpoint of the possibility of resistance with the assistance of grace he adhered to his end. Exhortations to struggle not only against actual sins, but also against the smouldering fire of concupiscence—which must be extinguished more and more in the righteous until at length death sets him free—occupy many pages of his writings. The jarring notes present in the above teaching do not seem to have troubled him at any time; he seeks to conceal them and to pass them over. Never once does he enter upon a real theological discussion of the most difficult point of all, the relation of grace to free will.

Luther also speaks of our freedom and our responsibility for our personal salvation in his Commentary on the Psalms: "My soul is in my own keeping; by the freedom of my will I can make it eternally happy or eternally unhappy by choosing or rejecting Thy law." Therefore Psalm cxviii. 109 says, "My soul is always in my hands," and although I am free to do either, yet I have not "forgotten Thy law."[1] He defends the principle

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 295. Cp. *ibid.*, 9, p. 112, Luther's marginal note on Anselm's "*Opuscula*," which has the same meaning. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 507, n. 3.

of the theologians, that God does not refuse His grace to him who does his best ("*facienti quod est in se, Deus non denegat gratiam*").[1] He teaches also that it is possible to prepare for grace which is always at hand.[2]

"Whoever keeps the law," he writes in the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, at a time when he had already denied the freedom of the will for good, "is in Christ, and grace is given him according as he has prepared himself for it to the best of his power."[3] Without grace man is, it is true, unable to do anything that is good in God's sight, but "the law of nature is known to everyone, and therefore no one is excusable" who does not follow it and fight against evil.[4] Grace, according to him, sets the enslaved will in the righteous free again to work for his salvation. "After he has received grace, he has been set free, at least to work for his eternal salvation."[5] This remarkable passage together with its continuation will be considered later when we deal more fully with the Commentary on Romans. We may also draw attention to the fact, that in his Notes on Tauler's sermons, written about the same time as the Commentary, quite against the supposed utter inability of the will for good, he acknowledges the natural inclination in man towards good—the so-called Syntheresis, or moral good conscience.[6]

In his lectures on Romans he insists that, "by means of works of penance and the cross," concupiscence must be fought against without intermission, forced back and diminished; "the body of sin" must, according to the Apostle, be destroyed.[7] Luther must therefore certainly have regarded man as capable of resisting his evil passions, at any rate with assistance from above.

Of his later statements it will suffice to mention the following:

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 262: "*Recte dicunt Doctores, quod homini facienti quod in se est infallibiliter dat gratiam et licet non de condigno sese possit ad gratiam præparare, quia est incomparabilis* (correct view of the supernatural) *tamen bene de congruo propter promissionem istam Dei et pactum misericordiæ.*" The best Scholastics, however, rightly questioned the "*de congruo.*" The proposition "*Facienti,*" etc., with "*infallibiliter dat*" instead of the usual "*non denegat*" is nominalistic (Denifle, 1^1, p. 556 f.; cp. pp. 407, 415).

[2] Besides the former passage, see for "*congrue se disponere,*" Weim. ed., 4, p. 329. Though Luther emphasises at the same time the *gratis esse* of grace, yet Loofs ("Dogmengesch.," 4, p. 700) is not altogether wrong, having regard for Luther's nominalistic views, in saying: "we must at least consider his opinion at that time as crypto-semi-Pelagian." He is rightly indignant with Köstlin ("Luthers Theologie," [2] p. 67 f.) for having "attempted to conform these passages with Luther's later views."

[3] Fol. 100. Denifle, 1^1, p. 414, n. 5; "Schol. Rom.," p. 38: "*per sui præparationem ad eandem, quantum in se est.*"

[4] Fol. 100. Denifle, 1^1, p. 414, n. 4; "Rom. Schol.," p. 37.

[5] Fol. 212. Denifle-Weiss, 1, p. 508, n. 2; "Schol. Rom.," p. 212: "*habita autem gratia, (arbitrium) proprie factum est liberum, saltem respectu salutis.*"

[6] "Werke," Weim. ed., 9, p. 103; Loofs, p. 708.

[7] Cp. "Schol. Rom.," p. 107.

"If I will not leave sin and become pious," he says of the struggle against evil, "I may indeed strive to become the master, and God's property, and to be free, but nothing will come of it."[1] Or again: "As long as we live here, evil desires and passions remain in us which draw us to sin, against which we must strive and fight, as St. Peter says (1 Peter ii. 11 f.). We must therefore always exercise ourselves and pray always and fight against sin . . . as often as you feel yourself tempted to impatience, pride, unchastity or other sins . . . you must forthwith think how best to withstand these arrows, and beg the Lord Jesus that your sin may not gain the upper hand and overcome you, but that it may be conquered by His grace."[2] "Do you wish to keep all the commandments," he says later, "to be free from your evil desires and from sin, as the commandments require and demand, then see you believe in Christ."[3]

Further, if we consider those passages in Luther's earlier writings alleged as proofs of his belief in the irresistibility of concupiscence, we find that in every case they merely emphasise the inevitable continuance of concupiscence in man, without in any way implying the necessity of our acquiescing in the same, and without excluding grace. In the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 he says for instance, "Why do we hold concupiscence to be irresistible? Well, try and do something without the interference of concupiscence. Naturally you cannot. So then your nature is incapable of fulfilling the law."[4] Elsewhere also Luther lays much stress upon the indestructibility and the impossibility of rooting out of man the smouldering fire of evil, the "*fomes peccati*," though he is wrong in making this condition equivalent to a culpable non-fulfilling of the law by man; he is mistaken not only in his common statement that man's evil inclination, even though involuntary, is sinful in God's sight, that it is in fact original sin, and that it would carry man to damnation were God not to impute to him Christ's righteousness; he also errs by unduly magnifying the power of concupiscence, as though the practice of virtue, prayer and the reception of the Sacraments did not weaken it much more than he is willing to admit.

In 1515 he declares that evil concupiscence or sin "cannot be removed from us by any counsel or work," and that "we all recognise it to be quite invincible ("*invincibilem esse concupiscentiam penitus*");[5] invincible, i.e. in the sense of ineradicable,

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 48, p. 388.

[2] "Werke," Erl. ed., 15, p. 53 f.

[3] *Ibid.*, 27, p. 180 f.; Weim. ed., 7, p. 24, Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen, 1520.

[4] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 374. See below, chapter viii. 3.

[5] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 35; "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 64: "*Si cognoscatur, quod nullis consiliis, nullis auxiliis nostris concupiscentia ex nobis possit auferri, et hæc contra legem est, quæ dicit 'Non concupisces' et experimur omnes invincibilem esse concupiscentiam penitus, quid restat, nisi ut sapientia carnis cesset et cedat, desperet in semetipsa, pereat et humiliata aliunde quærat auxilium, quod sibi præstare nequit?*

for which reason, as he again repeats here, it must at least be rendered innocuous by humble prayer for God's help. In spite of the strong expression "*invincibilis*," and in spite of the comparison he makes elsewhere between the evil inclination and Cerberus or Antæus,[1] he does not go further here than in another assertion in the Commentary on the Psalms which has also been urged against him: "the passion of anger, pride, sensuality, when it is aroused, is strong, yea invincible ('*immo invincibilis*'), as experience teaches," i.e. it appears so to the person attacked by it. He had just remarked that in such a case we must hope in God and despair of ourselves. He describes in the strongest terms, in the Commentary on the Psalms, the strength of concupiscence in habitual sinners who are not accustomed to turn to God's grace: "the sinner who is oppressed by vice, and feels the devil and his body of sin forcing him to evil, allows the inner voice to speak constantly against sin, and severely blames himself in his conscience . . . reason and the moral sense, remnants left over from the ruin of original sin, awaken in him and cry without ceasing to the Lord, even though the will sins, forced thereto by sin."[2] We repeat, that in his Commentary on the Psalms he does not yet actually deny natural freedom in the doing of what is good.

The view that man, without God's grace, is entirely lacking in freedom with regard to his passions—a view which, it is true, permeates Luther's Commentary on Romans—was not the starting-point of Luther's theological development. It was the end of the first stage through which he had passed. This doctrine reached later on its culminating point in his book, "*De servo arbitrio*," against Erasmus. Here, at the head of his proofs, he openly confesses himself a determinist, admitting that God has decreed beforehand all man's actions; any such determinism is, however, wanting in his earlier life, nor is it to be found in his Commentary on Romans; Luther does not yet show himself to be led by determinist ideas. Even in his work against Erasmus there are no forcible grounds for attributing the origin of his new teaching to his inward corruption. Therein he merely denies the freedom of the will for good without grace, though he allows it to be free in indifferent matters, a somewhat inconsistent theory owing to the difficulty of determining exactly the limitations of these indifferent things.

Neither the Commentary on the Psalms nor that on

[1] In Comm. on Epistle to the Rom., fol. 167; quoted by Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 476, n. 2; "Schol. Rom.," p. 144 f.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 207; 3, p. 535.

Romans gives us the impression of being the work of an immoral man, a fact which should also carry some weight. An author who at the first assault had capitulated to his evil desires would hardly have been able to conceal his low moral standard; he would rather have been tempted to join the Epicureans or the Sceptics, or the unbelieving ranks of the Humanists. Of anything of the kind there is no trace in the books last mentioned.

Their characteristic is rather—there is no harm in mentioning it now—a certain false spiritualism, a mysticism, which, especially in the interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans, frequently follows quite devious paths. In consequence of his unceasing opposition to self-righteousness, of his poor idea of God and of human strength, and of his false mystical train of thought, Luther came to dismiss human freedom and to set up the power of sin on the throne. Aristotle's teaching regarding the natural righteousness which arises from good actions is particularly distasteful to Luther, and equally distasteful to the nominalistic critic is the doctrine of supernatural righteousness through infused sanctifying grace, which he prefers to replace by the imputation of the merits of Christ.

3. The Real Starting-point and the Co-operating Factors

The real origin of Luther's teaching must be sought in a fundamental principle which governed him, which was fostered by the decline in his life as a religious and a priest, and more particularly by his inordinate love of his own opinion and by the uncharitable criticisms he passed upon others. This was his unfavourable estimate of good works, and of any effort, natural or supernatural, on the part of man.

This opposition to a principle, common to the Church and to monasticism, as to the necessity in which men generally and religious in particular stand of performing good works if they wish to please God, is the first deviation from the right path which we notice in him. He called it a fight against "holiness by works" and self-righteousness, and in this fight he went still further. He made his own the deadly error that man by his natural powers is unable to do anything but sin. To this he added that the man who,

by God's grace, is raised to justification through divinely infused faith and trust must, it is true, perform good works, but that the latter are not to be accounted meritorious. All works avail nothing as means for arriving at righteousness and eternal salvation; faith alone effects both. Not at the outset, but gradually, did he make his antagonism to good works the foundation of a doctrine built up under the influence of a lively imagination, a powerful and undisciplined self-confidence and other factors which will be mentioned below. In his controversy with the "holy by works" he had exclaimed (p. 81) "there is no greater pest in the Church to-day than those men who go about saying 'we must do good works.'" His real enemies were soon the traditional Catholic belief and practice regarding good works and personal activity in general; he did not confine himself to expressing his dissatisfaction with the Observantines in his own Order or the possible excesses of other supporters of outward works.

It is easy to recognise how this opposition to works runs like a dark thread through the first beginnings of his teaching of the new doctrine and onward through the whole course of his life. We may here, starting at the commencement, anticipate his history somewhat.

"At the first," so he says himself in later years, "my struggle was against trust in works,"[1] and this is confirmed by the MS. Commentary on Romans which he commenced in 1515 (see below, chap. vi. 3). The first occasion in his correspondence in which he allows his new views to appear is in 1516, in a recommendation to a friend that "he should cultivate disgust with his own righteousness and despair of himself," that this was better than to do as "those who plague themselves with their works until they think they are fit to stand in God's sight."[2] He expresses himself in a similar strain on self-righteousness in sermons preached at this time.[3]

The same line of thought also appears in a paradoxical form, as the basis of a disputation held at Wittenberg in 1516 under his presidency. Man sins, so we find it said, "when he does what

[1] Werke, Erl. ed., 58, p. 382; Table-Talk.

[2] To George Spenlein, April 8, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 29: "*anima tua, pertaesa propriam iustitiam, discat in iustitia Christi respirare atque confidere*," etc.; see above, p. 89.

[3] See above, p. 83.

is in him" ("*quod est in se*"), and those who are "righteous in their own eyes" by reason of their good works, i.e. all who do not simply "despair of themselves," are condemned. This ruling thought also pervades another disputation of one of his pupils in 1517, where we read: "every good work must needs at once make nature proud and puffed up," and "hope is not given us by our merits, but by suffering [painful interior struggles], which root out merit,"[1] i.e. which destroy every feeling of self-satisfaction grounded on merit. He tells one of his confidants in the same year that his great aim was "to grant nothing to human works, but to know only God's grace."[2]

In his first German work, printed in 1517, the Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, he opposes "all proud living and work and righteousness" and bewails the "spiritual pride, the last and deepest of all vices,"[3] with which, according to him, those are filled who seek for "safety and false consolation" in their works instead of simply embracing the "word of grace." He places works so much in the background in his teaching at that time, that he brings forward this objection against himself, whether, instead of always speaking of grace, he should not speak more of "human righteousness, wisdom and strength." Instead of defending himself he declares "a good life does not consist in many works"; to feel oneself "a miserable, damned, forsaken sinner" is better, even when God sends trouble of soul, which is "a drop or foretaste of the pains of hell," and which renders the human corpse quite ill and weak; such suffering makes a man like Christ who also bore the same.[4]

When in 1518 he published his Latin sermon on Penance, its chief thesis was that man's part in his reconciliation with God counted for nought; we must despair in order to attain contrition, at least from the motive of fear of God; we must merely submit with faith to the action of grace. "Whoever trusts to his contrition when receiving absolution, builds on the sand of his works and is guilty of shameless presumption."[5]

He writes in the same year that blinded adversaries accuse him of condemning good works, more especially that he dared to declare war against rosaries, the Little Office, and other prayers, and yet the sum of his sermon was only this: "that we must not place our confidence in our own work."[6]

Thus the depreciation of works is the prevailing note, even in his first public utterances; this it also remains.

When he began his attack on religious vows, he supported his

[1] "Disputation of Bartholomew Bernhardi"; "Werke," Weim. ed., p. 145 ff.

[2] "Disputation of Franz Günther"; *ibid.*, p. 224 ff., Nos. 37, 25.

[3] To Johann Lang, March 1, 1517, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 88. He will not be one: "*qui arbitrio hominis nonnihil tribuit.*"

[4] The Seven Penitential Psalms; "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 158 ff., especially pp. 160, 201, 211, 213, 219. For "pains of hell" cp. *ibid.*, p. 557.

[5] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, pp. 319–24.

[6] To Staupitz, March 31, 1518, "Briefwechsel," p. 175 f.

campaign by preference on the ostensible worthlessness of human works for obtaining merit in heaven; vows were to be rejected because the heart must not seek its stay in works,[1] and in his attacks on the celibacy of the clergy and religious, he again declared that he was attacking the "false saints" who intrench themselves behind the holiness of the works accomplished by them in a state superior to that of family life, but that faith makes all outward things free.[2] This prejudice against works is the principal feature in his polemics; for instance, he explains to King Henry VIII in a rejoinder directed against him that the enemy he was called upon to overcome was the pestilential doctrine of the necessity of appearing before God with works ("*velle per opera coram Deo agere*), whereas works were good only in the eyes of man.[3] In season and out of season, he pours forth his rage against the works in the Papacy with such words as these: Away with masses, pilgrimages, Office in Choir, saint-worship, cowls, virginity, confraternities, rules, and such-like, away with "the lousy works";[4] and so he preached to his very end in 1546.[5]

It is not, however, sufficient to take as Luther's starting-point his opposition to good works, though this always remains the chief feature in his doctrine. Further fresh light may be thrown on the enigmatical process of his inner change if we consider various influences which contributed to lead him to his new doctrine and to develop the same.

A preliminary glance at the case shows us, first of all, that Luther in his youth was trained in the theological school of Occam, i.e. in a form of theology showing great signs of decadence. The nominalistic, and more particularly the false anthropological speculations of Occam, d'Ailly and Biel, which did not allow its full rights to grace, called forth his opposition, and he soon lost all confidence in the old theology; in his exaggeration he went to the theological extreme contrary to Occamism and declared war against the ability of nature to do good. This was a negative effect of Occamism. This view encouraged him in his opposition to the "self-righteousness" which he fancied he saw every-

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 53, p. 288 (1525); Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 465 ff.

[2] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 552 ff.

[3] "Opp. Lat. var.," 6, p. 396; Weim. ed., 10, 2, p. 87 (*an.* 1522): "*opera quibus erga homines utendum est, offerunt Deo*," etc.

[4] "Werke," Erl. ed., 15^2, p. 282: "They praise their works," "the lousy works." Cp. *ibid.*, 22^2, pp. 52, 381.

[5] At Halle. "Werke," Erl. ed., 16, p. 221 ff., against the "lousy monks" and their "holiness by works." Cp. generally the four last sermons at Eisleben, *ibid.*, pp. 209, 230, 245, 264.

where, even in the zeal of the Observantines for their rule, especially when he had already fallen away from the ideals of his profession, from monastic piety and the spirit of the priesthood. A boundless self-reliance began to possess him, and led him forward regardless of all. This was the "wisdom of his own mind" of which he accuses himself in 1516 in a letter to a friend in the Order, speaking of it as the "foundation and root" of much unrest; bitterly he exclaims: "Oh, how much pain has the evil eye [this self-conceit] already caused me, and how much does it continue to plague me."[1] We may take these words more seriously than they were probably meant. His egotism and pride were flattered to such an extent by his imagination that he seemed to find everywhere confirmation of his own preconceived notions. Having read Tauler he at once considered him as the greatest of writers, because he was able to credit him with some of his own sentiments. Then again in Augustine, the Doctor of the Church, he found, as he imagined, a true reflection of his new doctrine. Devoid of the necessary intellectual and moral discipline, he allowed himself to be blinded by a fanatic attachment to his own opinion.

Carried away by his own judgment and regardless of the teaching of all the schools, yea, even of the Church herself, he passed into the camp of the enemy, perhaps without at first being aware of it; he came to deny entirely the merit of good works as though they were of no importance for our salvation as compared with the power of faith, an idea in which he fortified himself by his one-sided study of Holy Scripture and by his misinterpretation of the Epistles of St. Paul, that preacher of the power of faith and of the grace of Christ. He was always accustomed to consider the Bible as his special province, and, given his character, it was not difficult for him to identify himself with it, and to ascribe to himself the discovery of great Scriptural truths till then misunderstood or forgotten; for instance, the destruction of man's powers by original sin and their renewal by faith and grace. The false doctrine of the outward imputation of the merits of Christ came next. The school of Occam here prepared the way for him by its views on sanctifying grace and "acceptation" (imputa-

[1] To George Leiffer, April 15, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 31.

tion). Luther found in Occam's views on this subject no obstacle, but rather a support. This positive influence on him of Occam will be dealt with below (chap. iv. 3), together with other positive effects which decadent Scholasticism exercised upon him. Just as it suited his violent character to declare in no gentle words the renunciation of personal merit of every kind for the imputation of the merits of Christ, so the tendency of his own religious life, which had become alienated from the ideals of his Order, encouraged him to make the whole moral task consist in a simple, trustful appropriation of the saving merits of Christ, in confidence, comfort and safety, notwithstanding the dissentient inner voices.

Further, his study of false mysticism (see below, chap. v.) helped to clothe his new ideas in the deceptive dress of piety. To himself he seemed to be fulfilling perfectly the precepts of the mystics to seek everywhere the spirit and make small account of outward things: he imagined that Christ would be truly honoured, and the importance of Divine grace effectually made manifest, by despair of our own works, yea, even of ourself. The power which a mysticism gone astray exercised in those early stages upon a mind so full of imagination and feeling cannot be overestimated.

The oldest letter we have of Luther to Staupitz is in itself a witness to its writer's self-deception; to his fatherly friend he speaks quite openly and even appeals to his sermons "on the Love of God" in support of his own errors. Staupitz had warned him in a friendly manner that in many places his name stood in very bad repute. Luther admits in this letter, written four months after he had affixed the well-known Wittenberg Theses, that his doctrine of justification, his sermons on the worthlessness of works, and his opposition to the theology in vogue in the schools had raised a storm against him. People said that he rejected pious practices and all good works. And yet he was merely a disciple of Tauler's theology, and, like Staupitz, had taught nothing else but that "we should place our confidence in none other than Jesus Christ, not in any prayers and merits and good works, because we are saved not by our works, but by God's mercy." If God were working in him, so he concludes enthusiastically, then

no one can turn him aside; but if it was not God's work, then, indeed, no one can advance his cause.[1]

We must assume that at the beginning of his alienation from the Church among other motives he was largely deceived by the appearance of good; there is, in any case, nothing decisive to show the process as purely material, as a result of his efforts to relieve himself from his moral obligations, or as due to a worldly spirit. His responsibility, of course, became much greater when, as he advanced and was able to review things more calmly, he obstinately adhered to his new views, and, as his sermons and writings prove, defended them, even against the best-meant criticism, with bitterness, hate and passion. Self-love, which, even in his earlier life, had held too great a place, now took complete control of him, and the spirit of contradiction closed the gates for ever against his return. Luther's character was one which contradiction only served to stimulate and to drive to extremes.

Thus his spiritual pride was his real misfortune.[2]

In his case we find a sad confirmation of what is frequently observed in the falling away from truth of highly gifted minds; self-esteem and self-conceit suggest the first thoughts of a turning away from the truth, hitherto held in honour, and then, with fatal strength, condemns the wanderer to keep to the path he has chosen. Further concessions to the spirit of the world then follow as a consequence of the apostate's continued enmity to the Church. Of the last moral decline so noticeable in Luther's later life there is also no lack of similar instances, for it is the rule that after a man has been led astray by pride there should follow further moral deviations from the right path. The Monk's subsequent breach of his vows and his marriage with a former nun was a sacrilege, which to Catholic eyes showed plainly how he who begins in the spirit of pride, even though his purposes be good, may end in the flesh.

At the earliest inception of Luther's theological errors other elements may however be perceived which help to

[1] March 31, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 175.

[2] "Pride brought him to fall and to despair of himself, pride prevented his rising again and made him despair of God's grace which assists us to keep God's law which our concupiscence resists." So Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 463.

explain more easily his growing antipathy to so-called holiness by works. First, there was the real abuse then prevalent in the practice of works. Here we find a weak spot in the religious life of the time, nor is it unlikely that grave faults and repulsive excesses were to be found even in the Augustinian monasteries with which Luther was acquainted. We have already drawn attention to the formalism which in many cases had affected the clergy and the monastic houses. The often one-sided cultivation of exterior works, which, for instance, by the Indulgence-preachers, were proclaimed unfailing in their effects; the popular excesses in saint-worship; far-fetched legends and exhortations to imitate the extraordinary practices of saintly heroes; the stepmotherly treatment meted out in the pulpit to the regular and ordinary duties of a Christian; the self-interest, avarice and jealousy rampant in confraternities, pilgrimages and other public expressions of worship, faults which had slipped in partly owing to the petty egotism of the corporations and Orders, partly to the greed of their members, partly to a mania for false piety; all this may well have made a painful impression on the Wittenberg Professor, and have called forth his eloquent reproof. His tendency to look at the worst side of things doubtless contributed, together with the above reasons, to fill him with distaste for good works in general.

The extraordinary exaggerations of which he was guilty must, however, be imputed to himself alone. It has been said to his excuse that, as Rural Vicar, he had been able to acquire correct information regarding the state of things. But, as it happens, his frequent and unrestrained outbursts against abuses belong, at least in great part, to the time when he was a simple monk, who, apart from his journeys to Rome and Cologne and his stay at Erfurt, had seen little outside his cell beyond the adjoining walls of Wittenberg. His lectures on the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans both offer strange examples of such exaggerations, though both were delivered before he had had any experience as Rural Vicar.

Finally his own morbid personal condition must be taken into account; the after-effects of his passing fit of scrupulosity, and the lasting feeling of fear which sometimes quite overmastered him. His inclination to doubts concerning

his election remained, and therewith also the moral results which the fear of being predestined to hell would naturally exercise upon his peculiar temperament. He remained an outspoken predestinarian of the most violent type. (See chap. vi. 2.) He had to come to terms with this fear of hell, and his system shows the result; in many respects it appears as a reaction against the oppressive burden of the thought of eternal rejection.

His state of fear, however, as already indicated, proceeded not merely from the numerous temptations of which he himself speaks, but also from his own inward depression, from an affection, partly psychical and partly physical, which often prostrated him in terror. Only later, with the help of other facts of his inner life, will it be possible to deal with this darker side of Luther (vol. vi. xxxvi.). He imagined that during these fits, in which troubles of conscience also intervened, and which, according to his description, were akin to the pains of hell, he was forsaken by God, and sunk in the eerie night of the soul of which the mystics treat. He also considered them at an early period as a trial sent by God and intended to prepare him for higher things. In trying to escape from this feeling of terror, at the time of his change he embraced all the more readily ideas of false security which seemed to be offered by the appropriation of the merits of Christ, and the rejection of all attempt to acquire merit on one's own account. Psychologically, it is comprehensible that this solution seemed to him to let a beam of sunlight into the darkness of his terror. Anxious to escape from fear he threw himself frantically into the opposite extreme, into a system of self-pacification hitherto unknown to theology. But even this new system did not serve to calm him in the first stage of his error. There was still something lacking, so he felt, in his doctrine, and to this he attained only in the second stage of the process by his discovery that the seal is set on inward peace by the doctrine of the absolute assurance of salvation imparted by Faith. (See chap. x.)

Morbid fears prevented any childlike trust in God taking root in a mind so inexplicably agitated as his. With what great fervour he prepared himself for his priestly ordination, and for celebrating his first Mass, may here be illustrated by his own statement, that he then read Gabriel Biel's book

on the Mass ("*Sacri canonis missæ expositio literalis ac mystica*") "with a bleeding heart." So he himself says later, when he also speaks of the work, then widely used, as "an excellent book, as I then thought."[1] From the tone of his letter of invitation to his first Mass we can judge of his state of commotion. The confusion and trouble which he experienced at his first Mass, and the fear which seized him during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, lead us to conclude that he was readily overcome by vain apprehensions combined with physical excitement. Here also belongs Luther's later statement concerning the fears which he (and others too) experienced when in the monastery at the smallest ritual blunders, as though they had been great sins; such an assertion, though exaggerated and untrue, is probably an echo of his own troubled state during the liturgical ceremonies.

It is possible that those fears may have been the cause of his great pessimism with regard to human works. They may have contributed to make him see sin in what was merely the result of fallen nature with its involuntary concupiscences, without any consent of the will. Such fears may have pursued him when he began to brood over the doctrine of man's powers, original sin and grace; we speak of his "brooding," for his inclinations at that time were to a melancholy contemplation of things unseen. The timidity which he had acquired in the early days of his boyhood and at school doubtless had its effect in keeping him in such moods, apart from his own temperament.

On close examination of Luther's theological studies we find that his preparation for the office of professor—so far as a knowledge of the positive doctrine of the Church, of the Fathers and of good Scholasticism is concerned—was all too meagre.

He had not at his command the time necessary for penetrating deeply into dogma or into its presentment by earlier exponents. What was said above of his course of

[1] Lauterbach, "Tagebuch," p. 18. Biel's much-esteemed book on the Mass was composed principally of discourses to the clergy delivered in the cathedral at Mayence by his friend and teacher Egeling Becker of Brunswick. In the title Biel speaks of him as "*vita pariter et doctrina præfulgidus.*" Adolf Franz, "Die Messe im deutschen Mittelalter" (1902), p. 550 ff.

studies must, however, be supplemented by some further details.

After his ordination in Erfurt, at Easter, 1507, he began the two-year course of theology to which alone the privileges of the Augustinians obliged him. In addition to the lectures, which, as was usual, were based on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, there was also the Office in Choir; the pupils of the Order were indeed on lecture days not obliged to attend Matins, Sext and Compline, but the latter had to be said by Luther privately, as he was a priest. While the lectures on the Sentences were still in progress, Luther was pursuing his scriptural studies. Before the full time had expired however, after about eighteen months of theological study, he was, as mentioned before, called to the University of Wittenberg at the commencement of the winter term, 1508, in order to deliver "*Lectiones publicæ*" on moral philosophy, i.e. on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle. He was, it is true, expected to prosecute his theological studies at the same time by attending lectures, but for this he can scarcely have found much time, seeing that he had himself to give a daily lecture of one hour on so difficult a subject as the Ethics in the Faculty of Philosophy. A capable young man was needed by Staupitz to supply the requirements of the University, which was largely under his care, for the former lecturer on Ethics, Wolfgang Ostermayr, had, so it appears, suddenly left, and dire necessity caused the incompleteness of Luther's philosophical training to be overlooked. Staupitz was the more willing to shut his eyes to what was wanting, as he was personally much attached to the highly promising lecturer, about whom moreover he had already his plans. That Luther was not particularly pleased at the way in which he was employed, we learn from his Table-Talk: "At Erfurt I was reading nothing but the Bible, when God, in a wonderful manner, and contrary to everyone's expectations, sent me from Erfurt to Wittenberg; that was a nice come down for me."[1] The word actually made use of in the last sentence was a slang expression of the students and implied that his new position was not to his liking. It was less the overwork than his antipathy to philosophy and Aristotle that made him feel uncomfortable; he himself complains: "*violentum est studium, maxime philosophiæ*" in his letter from Wittenberg to Johann Braun in Eisenach (March 17, 1509). In this letter he also confesses that he is longing to exchange philosophy for theology.[2] After a single term his professors thought him worthy of the degree of "Bacularius (Baccalaureus) Biblicus." This was the lowest theological degree, and was conferred on him by Staupitz the Dean on March 9, 1509, according to the Dean'

[1] "Tischreden," "Werke," Erl. ed., 58, p. 243.

[2] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 6: he yearns for theology which examines "the kernel of the nut and the marrow of the bones: *quæ nucleum nucis et medullam tritici et medullam ossium scrutatur.*"

Register of the Theological Faculty. Thus did he pass the two years of his course of theology.

Besides the lecture on philosophy he had now also to discourse daily for one hour on portions of Holy Scripture, teaching being then considered a part of the course of studies. In addition to this he was obliged to attend the theological lectures and disputations. "Indeed a colossal task," says a Protestant Luther-scholar, "which shows what great demands Staupitz made on the powers of his pupils."[1]

The next degree in theology, that of "Sententiarius" was to have been conferred on Luther, as we know, in the autumn of 1509, when suddenly, owing to internal disputes, he was recalled from Wittenberg to his monastery at Erfurt. What prospect of quiet theological study opened out before him there? At Erfurt his preparation again consisted principally in teaching and in disputing in his own peculiar way. As soon as the University had accepted him as "Sententiarius," he had at once to give theological lectures on the Sentences. He was also employed in the monastery, together with Dr. Nathin, as sub-regent of house studies, i.e. in the instruction of the novices in the duties of their profession. At the same time he not only continued his accustomed biblical reading, but, in order to be able to prosecute it more thoroughly, began to study Greek and Hebrew, in which Johann Lang, an Augustinian who has been frequently mentioned and who was a trained Humanist, rendered him appreciable service. The eighteen months he spent in the Erfurt monastery were distracted by the dissensions within the Order, by his journeys to Halle and then to Rome and his intercourse with Erfurt Humanists, such as Petrejus (Peter Eberbach). After his return from five months' absence in Rome, the dispute in the Order continued to hinder his studies and finally drove him to the friends of Staupitz at Wittenberg, as soon as he had declared himself against the Erfurt Observantines. Thence the affairs of the Order carried him in May, 1512, to the Chapter at Cologne, where the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him. During his preparation for his doctorate he already began, urged on by Staupitz, to preach in the monastery church at Wittenberg, where the Elector once heard him and was filled with admiration. He was also always ready to assist others with their work, as for instance when he prepared for the Provost the address to be delivered before the Synod at Leitzkau. And when at thirty years of age, in October, 1515, he undertook, as Doctor, to deliver the *lectura in biblia* at the University of Wittenberg, this was not in his case the commencement of a career of learned leisure, but the filling of a position encumbered with the cure of souls, with preaching and much monastic business.

In view of his defective education in theology properly so called, we may well raise the question how, without any thorough knowledge of the subject, he could feel himself summoned to undertake such far-reaching theological changes.

[1] G. Oergel, "Vom jungen Luther," Erfurt, 1899, p. 113.

" At the parting of the ways," says Denifle, regarding Luther's knowledge of theology, " and even when he had already set up his first momentous theses and declared war on Scholasticism, he was still but half-educated. . . . He knew nothing of the golden age of Scholasticism, and was even unacquainted with the doctor of his own Order [who followed the greater Schoolmen] Ægydius of Rome." " He was a self-taught, not a methodically trained, man."[1] In spite of his self-reliance, a feeling of the insufficiency of his education seems to have tormented him at the outset. We should not perhaps be justified in accepting what he said in later years, that he had at first " been greatly afraid of the pulpit " even when (in his second stay at Wittenberg) it was only a question of preaching " in the Refectory before the brethren."[2] But according to his own statement, he expressed very strongly to Staupitz his fear of taking the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and two years later he declared that he had only yielded to pressure.[3] But Staupitz, who urged him forward with excessive zeal, had said in his presence when Luther preached before the Elector : " I will prepare for Your Highness in this man a very special Doctor, who will please you well," words which the Elector did not forget and of which he reminded Staupitz in 1518.[4]

The fact that Staupitz made such slight demands in Luther's case regarding theological preparation may be explained from his own course of studies. His previous history shows his studies to have been anything but deep, and this is a matter worth noting, because it is an example of how a solid study of theology was at that time often wanting even in eminent men in the Church. After he had been entered at Tübingen in 1497 as Master of Arts, he commenced (October 29, 1498), the biblical course, and, a little more than two months later (January 10, 1499), began to deliver theological lectures on the Sentences. Half a year of this qualified him for the Licentiate, and, a day after, he became Doctor of Divinity. " These untrained theologians," says Denifle, after giving the dates just mentioned, " wanted to reform theology, and looked with contempt on the theology of the Middle Ages, of which they were utterly ignorant."[5]

[1] Denifle, 1^1, p. 501 f.

[2] Oergel, p. 118, from the Gotha MS., A 262, fol. 258.

[3] This is at least what he assures the Erfurt Faculty, December 21, 1514. " Briefwechsel," 1, p. 24.

[4] Letter of the Elector to Staupitz (April 7, 1518), in Kolde, " Anal. Lutherana," p. 314.

[5] " Luther und Luthertum," 1^2, p. 607, n. 1,

CHAPTER IV

"I AM OF OCCAM'S PARTY"

1. A closer examination of Luther's Theological Training

It was not time only which was wanting in Luther's case for a deep course of theological study, he was even denied what was equally essential, namely, a really scholarly presentment of theology such as is to be found in the best period of Scholasticism.

The great Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, with their finished system, combining a pious veneration for the traditions of the Fathers with high flights of thought, were almost unknown to him; at least, he never esteemed or made any attempt to penetrate himself with the learning of Albertus Magnus, Thomas of Aquin or Bonaventure, notwithstanding the fact that in the Church their teaching, particularly that of Aquinas, already took the first place, owing to the approval of the Holy See. Luther frequently displayed his utter ignorance of Thomism, as we shall show later.[1]

The nominalistic philosophy and theology offered him by the schools he attended has, with reason, been described as a crippled parody of true Scholasticism. In this, its latest development, Scholasticism had fallen from its height, and, abandoning itself to speculative subtleties, had opened a wide field to Nominalism and its disintegrating criticism. The critical acumen demonstrated by John Duns Scotus, the famous Franciscan Doctor (*Doctor Subtilis*), who died at Cologne in 1308, the late-comers would fain have further emphasised. Incapable as they were of

[1] When Luther in his answers to Prierias (Weim. ed., 1, p. 661), angered at his opponent's frequent references to the Angelic Doctor, remarks: "*etiam ea quæ fidei sunt, in quæstiones vocat et fidem vertit in 'utrum,'*" the words "*quæstiones*" and "*utrum*" lead us to doubt whether he had done more than read the headings of the "Questions." Cp. Denifle, 1^1, p. 550.

producing anything great themselves, they exercised their wits in criticising every insignificant proposition which could possibly be questioned in philosophy and theology. The Franciscan, William of Occam (Ockham, Surrey), called *Doctor Singularis*, or *Invincibilis*, also *Venerabilis Inceptor Nominalium*, was one of the boldest and most prolific geniuses of the Middle Ages in the domain of philosophy and theology. His great works, composed during his professorship, especially his Commentary on the Sentences, his "*Centifolium*" and his "*Quodlibeta*," are proofs of this. On theological questions concerning poverty he came into conflict with the Pope, his Sentences were condemned by the University of Paris, he appealed from the Holy See to a General Council, was excommunicated in 1328, protested against the decisions of the General Chapter of the Order, and then took refuge with Lewis of Bavaria, the schismatic, whose literary defender he became. He wrote for him, among other things, his ecclesiastico-political "*Dialogus*," and even after his protector's death continued to resist Clement VI. Occam died at Munich in 1349, reconciled with his Order, though whether the excommunication had already been removed or not is doubtful.

He revived Nominalism in philosophy and theology. His teaching was so much that of the schools through which Luther had been that the latter could declare: "*sum occamicæ factionis*,"[1] and speak quite simply of Occam as "*magister meus*."[2] It cannot, however, be said, as it recently has been, that Luther "prided himself on being Occam's disciple," and that he "would not give a refusal to his beloved master"; for it was more in irony than in earnest that he spoke when he said: "I also am of Occam's party"; and when, as late as 1530, he still speaks of "Occam, my beloved master,"[3] this is said in jest only in order to be able to accuse him more forcibly as an expert with the greatest of errors; nevertheless, he places Occam in point of learning far above Thomas of Aquin, the "so-called Doctor of Doctors," whom he despised. Regarding, however, the esteem in which Occam was held in his youth, he afterwards said: "We had to give him the title *Vener-*

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 6, p. 600; "Opp. Lat. var.," 5, p. 137.
[2] Cordatus, "Tagebuch," p. 165.
[3] "Werke," Erl. ed., 24^2, p. 375.

abilis huius sectæ [*scholæ*] *primus repertor*," but adds: "Happy are you [my table-companions] in not having to learn the dung which was offered me."[1] He felt compelled, nevertheless, to praise Occam's dialectic skill and his inexhaustible acuteness, and for his part considered him the most gifted of the Schoolmen ("*summus dialecticus, scholasticorum doctorum sine dubio princeps et ingeniosissimus*").[2] It was not only at a later period that he was ready to admit his weaknesses, for even at the beginning of his course, in the Commentary on Romans (1515–16), he attacks certain essential errors of Occam and his school.

His acquaintance with the master he owed, moreover, more to Occam's disciples, i.e. to the later theologians of the Occamist school, more especially Gabriel Biel, than to his own reading of the voluminous and unwieldy works of Occam himself. We are already aware that, of the disciples and intellectual heirs of Occam, he studied more particularly the two well-known writers d'Ailly, Cardinal of Cambrai—whom Luther usually calls quite simply the Cardinal—whose ideas were very daring, and the humble Gabriel Biel, Professor at Tübingen, whose writings, clear, and rich in thought, possessed many good qualities.

Their one-sided Nominalism unfortunately led these Occamists to an excessive estimate of the powers of nature and an undervaluing of grace, and also to a certain incorrect view of the supernatural. We must add that they were disposed to neglect Holy Scripture and to set too much store on their speculations, and that, with regard to the relations between reason and faith, they did not abide by the approved principles and practice of the earlier Schoolmen.

The Occamist theology strongly influenced the talented and critical pupil, though diversely. Most of the elements of which it was made up repelled him, and as he regarded them as essential parts of Scholasticism, they filled him with a distaste for Scholasticism generally. Other of its elements attracted him, namely, those more in conformity with his ideas and feeling. These he enrolled in the service of his theological views, which—again following Occam's

[1] Mathesius, "Tischreden" (ed. Kroker), p. 172. Uttered between the 7th and the 24th August, 1540.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 6, p. 183; "Opp. Lat. var.," 4, p. 188.

example—he developed with excessive independence. Thus the tendency to a false separation of natural and supernatural commended itself to him; he greedily seized upon the ideas of Nominalism with regard to imputation after he had commenced groping about for a new system of theology. His greatest objection was for the views of his teachers regarding the powers of man and grace. This it was, more especially, which raised in him the spirit of contradiction and set him on a path of his own. To one in his timorous state such views were unsympathetic; he himself scented sin and imperfection everywhere; also he preferred to see the powers of the will depreciated and everything placed to the account of grace and Divine election. Thus, what he read into Holy Scripture concerning faith and Christ seemed to him to speak a language entirely different from that of the subtleties of the Occamists.

His unfettered acceptance or rejection of the doctrinal views submitted to him was quite in accordance with his character. He was not one to surrender himself simply to authority. His unusual ability incited him to independent criticism of opinions commonly received, and to voice his opposition in the public disputations against his not overbrilliant Nominalist professors; the strong appeal which he made to the Bible, with which the others were less well acquainted, and to the rights of faith and the grace of Christ, was in his favour.

2. Negative Influence of the Occamist School on Luther

Besides the recently published Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans various statements in his sermons, disputations and letters prove the opposition that existed between Luther and his own school. In the Disputation of 1517 entitled "*Contra scholasticam theologiam*," for instance, he expressly names, as the opponents against whom his various theses are aimed, Scotus, Occam, the Cardinal, Gabriel, and, generally, "*omnes scholastici*" or "*communis sententia*," "*dictum commune*," "*usus multorum*," "*philosophi*" or "*morales*."[1]

Before we proceed to examine the individual points of Luther's conflict with Occamism and with what he considered the teaching of Scholasticism as a whole, two

[1] "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 315 *seq.*

general points of this opposition must be mentioned. His first grievance is the neglect of Holy Scripture.

A sensible want in the Divinity studies of that time lay, as a matter of fact, in the insufficient use of the positive foundations of theology, i.e. above all of Holy Scripture, and also of the tradition of the Fathers of the Church and the decisions of the Church in her office as teacher. "Luther had rightly recognised," says Albert Weiss, "what harm resulted from the regrettable neglect of Holy Scripture on the part of so many theologians, and therefore he chose as his watchword the cry for the improvement of theology by a return to the Bible."[1] "That Luther was moved to great anger by the Nominalists' neglect of the Bible is not to be wondered at."[2] "He would not have been Luther," the same author rightly says, "had he not soon veered round to the other extreme, i.e. to the battle-cry: Scripture only, and nothing but the Scripture, away with all Scholasticism."

This abuse, however, had already been reproved and bewailed by the Church before Luther's time; there is no dearth of statements by the very highest authorities urging a remedy, though it is true more should have been done. Pope Clement VI wrote reprovingly to the University of Paris, on May 20, 1346: "Most theologians do not trouble themselves about the text of Holy Scripture, about the actual words of their principal witnesses, about the expositions of the Saints and Doctors, i.e. concerning the sources from which real theology is taken, a fact which is bitterly to be deplored. . . . In place of this they entangle themselves in philosophical questions and in disputes which merely pander to their cleverness, in doubtful interpretations, dangerous doctrines and the rest."[3] But "with the prevalent spirit of formalism and disorder, embodied chiefly in Nominalism," "a healthy and at the same time fruitful treatment of Holy Scripture had become impossible. . . . These were abuses which had long been calling for the reintroduction of a positive and more scriptural treatment of theology."[4] Though the judgment passed by Luther in his later years on the neglect of Holy Scripture was somewhat too general (for it was historically untrue to say that Scripture had ever been altogether given up by the Church),[5] yet contemporaries agree with him in blaming the too extensive use of Aristotle's philosophy in the schools to the detriment of the Bible-text. Long before, Gerson, whose books were in Luther's hands, had laid stress on the importance of Holy Scripture for theology. "Holy Scripture," he says, "is a Rule of Faith, which it is only necessary to understand aright; against it there is no appeal to authority or to the decisions of human reason: nor can custom, law or practice have any weight if proved to be contrary to Holy Scripture."[6]

[1] Denifle-Weiss, 2, p. 331. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 229.
[3] Denifle, "Chartularium universitatis Paris.," 2, p. 588.
[4] Thus A. Weiss, p. 330. [5] See volume v., xxxiv., 3.
[6] "Opp.," ed Antv., 1706, p. 457.

Luther, with palpable exaggeration, lays the charge at the door of theology as a whole, even of the earlier school, and would have us believe that the abuse was inseparable from ecclesiastical science. He speaks to this effect more and more forcibly during the course of his controversies. Thus in 1530 he says of the Scholastics, that they "despised Holy Scripture." "What! they exclaimed, the Bible? Why, the Bible is a heretic's book, and you need only read the Doctors to find that out. I know that I am not lying in saying this, for I grew up amongst them and saw and heard all about them." And so they had arrived at doctrines about which one must ask: "Is this the way to honour Christ's blood and death?" Everything was full of "idle doctrines which did not agree among themselves, and strange new opinions."[1] Occam, he declares in his Table-Talk in 1540, "excelled them all in genius and has confuted all the other schools, but even he said and wrote in so many words that it could not be proved from Scripture that the Holy Ghost is necessary for a good work."[2] "These people had intelligence, had time for work and had grown grey in study, but about Christ they understood nothing, because they esteemed Holy Scripture lightly. No one read the Bible so as to steep himself in its contents with reflection, it was only treated like a history book.[3]

It is true that the scholastic treatment of the doctrines of faith, as advocated by Occam against the more positive school, disregarded Holy Scripture to such an extent that, in the master's subtle Commentaries, it hardly finds any place; even in the treatment of the supernatural virtues—faith, hope and charity—Scripture scarcely intervenes.[4] But it was unjust of Luther, on this account, to speak of the Schoolmen's contempt for the Bible, or to say, for instance in his Table-Talk, about his master, Gabriel Biel, whose Commentary on the Sentences had become, so to speak, a hand-book: "The authority of the Bible counted for nothing with Gabriel."[5] Biel esteemed and utilised the Bible as the true Word of God, but he did not satisfy young Luther, who desiderated in him much more of the Bible and a little less of philosophy. The "word," he declares, was not cherished by the

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 24^2, p. 375, in his exhortation to the clergy.

[2] More on this below. He repeats this accusation several times, also in the context of the previous passage. He is confusing natural good works with supernatural and meritorious good works.

[3] Mathesius, "Tischreden" (Kroker), p. 173. Uttered between the 7th and 24th August, 1540.

[4] Cp., for instance, Occam, "In libros sententiarum," Lugd., 1495, l. 3, q. 8 to 1. The passage "*Nunc autem manent fides*," etc., is the only one mentioned, with the reference "Ad. Cor." Of any exegetical application there is no question whatever. Speculative theology left biblical interpretation too exclusively to the perfunctory Bible lecturers, and assumed as well known and proved what should first have been positively established.

[5] Lauterbach, "Tagebuch," p. 18. Cp. "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 270.

priests, and this he had already shown in his Leitzkau discourse to be the reason of all the corruption.[1]

The preponderance of philosophy, and more particularly the excessive authority of Aristotle, in the theological method of his circle offered Luther a second point of attack. Here also it was a question of a rather widely spread abuse which the better class of Schoolmen had prudently avoided. The Nominalistic schools, generally speaking, showed a tendency to a rationalistic treatment of the truths of faith, which affrighted Luther considerably. General ideas, according to the Nominalists, were merely "*nomina*," i.e. empty words; Nominalists concerned themselves only with what was actual and tangible. Nominalism was fond of displaying its dialectic and even its insolence at the expense of theology on the despised Universal ideas. We can understand the invective with which Luther gives expression to his hatred of Scholasticism, though his right to do so arose only from his limited acquaintance with those few Scholastics whom he had chosen,[2] or, rather, who had been allotted to him, as his masters; the schools he attended were at that time all following the method of the Nominalists, then usually known as "modern."

Already, in 1509 (see above, p. 22), a severe criticism of Aristotle appears in Luther's marginal notes. This is in a gloss on Augustine's work "On the City of God" which he was then devouring as a sort of antidote: "Far more apparent is the error of our theologians when they impudently chatter ('*impudentissime garriunt*') and affirm of Aristotle that he does not deviate from Catholic truth."[3]

Luther's later exaggerations need not be refuted, in which he complains so loudly of the idolatrous Aristotelian worship of reason on the part of all the Scholastics. It was in general perfectly well known regarding Aristotle that he had erred, and also where he erred; books had even been written dealing with his deviations from the faith. This, however, did not prevent many from over-estimating him. We must set against this, however, the fact that Luther's own professor of philosophy in the University of Erfurt, Bartholomew Arnoldi of Usingen, had

[1] See above, p. 83.

[2] Denifle-Weiss, 2, p. 300 ff., where the danger to the faith which lay in the foundation tendency of Nominalism is strongly emphasised, but where it is also admitted that the consequences were not actually drawn, and that it required "centuries of thought before the questions raised were pursued to their bitter end," p. 303.

[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 9, p. 27.

declared, like others before him, that those who represented the Stagirite as without errors were "not worthy of the name of philosophers, for they were not lovers of the truth but mocked at philosophy; they should just read their hero more carefully and they would find that, for instance, he made out the world to be without any beginning, a view which Moses, the prophet of truth, had shown to be an error; Scotus, too, wrote in the first book of his Commentary on the Sentences, that the works of Aristotle were more in agreement with the law of Mohammed than with that of Christ."[1] Usingen was an earnest and moderate man, who did not shrink, even in his philosophical writings, from preferring Divine Revelation to the exaggeration of the rights of reason. "The inadequacy of philosophers is as apparent as the great value of the Sacred Books. The latter rise far above the knowledge attained by mere human reason and natural light."[2] Owing to the fact that he had made no secret of his views in his intercourse with Luther, especially when they became more intimate on Luther's entering the Order to which he himself belonged,[3] we can understand and explain the sympathy and respect with which Luther long after cherished his memory, though the path he followed was no longer that of his old teacher. Usingen was a Nominalist, but his example shows that there were some enlightened men who belonged to this school, and who did it honour.

In the course of time, regardless of the numerous examples giving him the lie, Luther came ruthlessly to condemn all the Schoolmen and the whole Middle Ages ostensibly on the ground of the pretended poisoning of the faith by Aristotle, but really because he himself had set up a contradiction between faith and reason.[4] He says in 1521 that the Scholastics, headed by Aquinas, "*solus aristotelicissimus ac plane Aristoteles ipse*," had smuggled philosophy into the world, though the Apostle had condemned it; thus it became too powerful, made Aristotle equal to Christ in dignity and trustworthiness, and darkened for us the Sun of righteousness and truth, the Son of God.[5] Three years before he had declared in writing to his other professor of philosophy at the University of Erfurt, Jodocus Trutfetter, who was vexed

[1] "Parvulus philosophiæ naturalis," Lips., 1499, fol. 136. N. Paulus, "Der Augustiner Barth. Arnoldi v. Usingen" (Strasburg "Theol. Studien," 1, 3), p. 4.

[2] *Ibid.*, fol 18; Paulus, *ibid.*, p. 5.

[3] Paulus, p. 17; Oergel, "Vom jungen Luther," p. 131.

[4] Cp. e.g. Luther's theses in Drews' Disputations, p. 42: "*Ratio aversatur fidem, Solius Dei est, dare fidem contra naturam, contra rationem, et credere.*" It belongs to the year 1536.

[5] "Opp. Lat. var.," 5, p. 335; "*Responsio ad Catharinum.*" Cp. Weim. ed., 8, 127: "*De Thoma Aquino, an damnatus vel beatus sit, vehementissime dubito. . . . Multa hæretica scripsit et autor est regnantis Aristotelis, vastatoris piæ doctrinæ.*" He continues, saying that he is entitled to hold this opinion, "*qui educatus in eis sim et coætaneorum doctissimorum ingenia expertus, optima istius generis scripta contemplatus.*" So in "*Rationis Latomianæ confutatio*" (1521).

with his theses *Contra scholasticam theologiam*, that he daily prayed to God that in place of the perverse studies in vogue, the wholesome study of the Bible and the Fathers might again be introduced ("*ut rursum bibliæ et s. patrum purissima studia revocentur*").[1] Yet three years earlier, in his first lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, he had said to his pupils: "let us learn to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified," and urged them not to waste their time in the study of the foolish whims of metaphysicians, but at most, to treat philosophy as a subject which one must be acquainted with in order to be able to refute it, and on the other hand to throw themselves with all their might into the study of Holy Scripture.[2]

There can therefore be no question, as we have seen, that his idea that philosophy was the ruin of the Church, an idea present in his mind even in his earliest public life, was founded on the many actually existing abuses, though his own ultra-spiritualism and his gloomy mistrust of man's nature led him to feel the evil more than others, so that, in reacting against it, he lost his balance instead of calmly lending his assistance towards improving matters.

Luther's reaction was not only against Occamism in general, but also against various particular doctrines of that school, especially, as stated before, against such doctrines as exalted the powers of nature at the expense of grace.

Here again he committed his first fault, the indefensible injustice of blindly charging Scholasticism and theology generally with what he found faulty in his own narrow circle, though these errors had been avoided by St. Thomas and the best of the Schoolmen. It has been pointed out that he was not acquainted with this real Scholasticism, nevertheless, in 1519, he had the assurance to say: "No one shall teach me scholastic theology, I know it."[3] "I was brought up amongst them (Thomas, Bonaventure, etc.), I am also acquainted with the minds of the most learned contemporaries and have saturated myself in the best writings of this sort."[4]

He, all too often, gives us the means to judge the value of this assertion of his. In the same year, for instance, he sums up the chief points of the theology which alone he had learnt, and calls

[1] Letter of May 9, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 190.
[2] Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 610, n. 1.
[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 5, p. 22; "*Operationes in psalmos.*' Written in 1519 ff.
[4] Above, p. 137, note 5.

it in all good faith the scholastic theology of the Church, though it was merely the meagre theology of his own Occamist professors.

In order to show all he had had to struggle with he says: "I had formerly learned among the monstrous things ('*monstra*') which are almost accounted axioms of scholastic theology . . . that man can do his part in the acquiring of grace; that he can remove obstacles to grace; that he is able to oppose no hindrance to grace; that he can keep the commandments of God according to the letter, though not according to the intention of the lawgiver; that he has freedom of choice [personal freedom in the work of salvation] between this and that, between both contradictories and contraries; that his will is able to love God above all things through its purely natural powers and that there is such a thing as an act of charity, of friendship, by merely natural powers."[1]

We are to believe that these were the "axioms of scholastic theology!"

Such was not the case. For all acts necessary for salvation true Scholasticism demanded the supernatural "preventing" grace of God.[2] Yet as early as 1516 Luther had elegantly described all the scholastic theologians as "Sow theologians," on account of their pretended "*Deliria*" against grace.[3] His first fault, that of unwarranted generalisation, comes out clearly.

The second, more momentous, fault which Luther committed was to fly to the extreme even in doctrine, abolishing all that displeased him and setting up as his main thesis, that man can do nothing, absolutely nothing, good. Not only did he say: "I learnt nothing in scholastic theology worth remembering; I only learnt what must be unlearnt, what is absolutely opposed to Holy Scripture" ("*omnino contraria divinis litteris*").[4] He also asserted at a very early period that Holy Scripture teaches that God's grace does everything in man of itself alone without his vital participation, without liberty, without resolve, without merit. Such a statement does not indeed appear in the Commentary on the Psalms, but it will be found in his academic lectures on the Pauline Epistles, more especially

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 401.

[2] Cp. Denifle, 1^1, p. 554, where he refers to a "Treatise on the preparation for grace" to appear in his second volume, but which is not contained in the second volume edited by A. Weiss.

[3] "Schol. Rom.," p. 110. "*O stulti, O Sawtheologen.*" He is referring to the "*theologi scholastici*," p. 108, "*nostri theologi*," p. 111.

[4] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 414.

in the Commentary on Romans. For a moment he thought he had discovered in St. Augustine the necessary weapons against the formalism of his school of theology, but now St. Paul appeared to him to give the loudest testimony against it; the Apostle is so determined in his denunciation of the pride of human reason and human will, and in presenting the Gospel of the Son of God, faith and grace, as the only salvation of mankind. Luther imagined he had found in Paul the doctrines which appealed to him: that all human works were equally useless, whether for eternal salvation or for natural goodness; that man's powers are good for nothing but sin; if grace, which the Apostle extols, is to come to its rights, then we must say of original sin that it has utterly ruined man's powers of thinking and willing so far as what is good in God's sight is concerned; original sin still lives, even in the baptised, as a real sin, being an invincible attraction to selfishness and all evil, more particularly to that of the flesh; by it the will is so enslaved that only in those who are justified by grace can there be any question of freedom for good.

As regards Occam's teaching concerning man, his Fall and his powers, so far as this affects the question of a correct understanding of Luther's development: in the matter of original sin it agreed with that of Aquinas and Scotus, according to which its essence was a *carentia iustitiæ debitæ*, i.e. *originalis*; likewise it asserted the existence of concupiscence in man, the *fomes* or tinder of sin, as Occam is fond of calling it, as the consequence of original sin; on the other hand it minimised too much the evil effects of original sin on the reason and on the will, by assuming that these powers still remain in man almost unimpaired. This was due to the nominalistic identification of the soul with its faculties; as the soul remained the same as before, so, they said, the powers as a whole also remained the same.[1] The "disabling"

[1] Biel, in 2 Sent., dist. 30, q. 2 ad 4 (Brixiæ, 1574): "*Rectitudo autem naturalis voluntatis, eius sc. libertas, non corrumpitur per peccatum; illa enim est realiter ipsa voluntas, nec ab ea separabilis.*" Cp. however Biel's other passage, quoted by Denifle-Weiss, 1, p. 535, n. 4, where he speaks differently. The teaching of the school of Occam deserves more careful examination than has hitherto been bestowed on it, and perhaps the Luther studies which have been so actively carried on of late will promote this. Meanwhile we must give a warning against statements which presuppose an excessive alienation of this school from the general teaching of the Church. Occam has recently been represented by the Protestant party, in discussions on Luther's development, as the "outspoken antipodes of mediæval Christendom," "whose aim it clearly was to strike at the very root of the ancient

of these powers of which St. Thomas and the other Scholastics speak, i.e. the weakening which the Council of Trent also teaches ("*liberum arbitrium viribus attenuatum et inclinatum*"),[1] was not sufficiently emphasised.

Gabriel Biel, whose views are of some weight on account of his connection with Luther, finds the rectitude of the natural will (*rectitudo*) in its liberty, and this, he says, has remained intact because it is, as a matter of fact, the will itself, from which it does not differ.[2] In other passages, it is true, he speaks of "wounds"; for owing to concupiscence the will is "inconstant and changeable"; but he nevertheless reverts to "*rectitudo*," erroneously relegating the results of original sin to the lower powers alone. Following Occam, and against St. Thomas and Scotus, he makes of concupiscence a "*qualitas*," viz. a "*qualitas corporalis*."[3] Again, following his master and d'Ailly, Biel asserts—and this is real Occamism—that the will is able without grace to follow the dictates of right reason ("*dictamen rectæ rationis*") in everything, and is therefore able of itself to keep the whole law of nature, even to love God purely and above all things.[4] An example of how inaccurate Biel is in the details of his theological discussions has been pointed out by Denifle, who shows that in quoting three various opinions of the greater Scholastics on a question of the doctrine of original sin ("*utrum peccatum originale sit aliquid positivum in anima vel in carne*") "not one of the opinions is correctly given," and yet this "superficial and wordy

Christian view of the Redemption by grace." Revelation was to him merely a "collection of unreasonable doctrines," and the Bible a "chance jumble of unreasonable Divine oracles." As a matter of fact, he always recognised in the teaching of the Church the correct interpretation of Scripture, and was under the impression that his teaching on the Redemption was conformable with the Church's interpretation. We are also told that he always restricted infallibility to Holy Scripture, denying it to the Councils; that, with regard to the doctrine of grace, he assailed the teaching of the Schoolmen according to which grace was to be considered as "Divine matter," and took the forgiveness of sins to mean merely the non-imputation of sin; that Luther's proofs of the omnipresence of the body of Christ had been anticipated by Occam, and that, in the same way, his teaching with regard to the right of worldly authorities to reform the Church was also to be found in Occam. As regards Occam's ecclesiastico-political ideas it is quite true they pervade Luther's theses, nevertheless Occam's erroneous doctrines on the constitution of the Church were not studied in the schools through which Luther had passed, but only those on Scholasticism: they are also never quoted by Luther in defence of his teaching.

[1] Sess., vi., c. 1.

[2] Cp. p. 140, note, where: "*Rectitudo naturalis voluntatis est libertas voluntatis*," etc., precedes the first words quoted.

[3] "*Qualitas corporalis inclinans appetitum sensitivum*," etc., and "*qualitas carnis inordinata inclinans*," etc. In 2 Sent., q. 26; in 3 Sent., q. 2; Quodlib., 3, q. 10; Denifle, 1^1, p. 843.

[4] In 3 Sent., dist. 27, art. 3, quoted further on p. 155, n. 1. Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 535, n. 4, and p. 536 ff.

author was one of Luther's principal sources of information regarding the best period of Scholasticism."[1]

The Nominalists doubtless recognised the supernatural order as distinct from the natural, and Occam as well as Biel, d'Ailly and Gerson do not here differ materially from the rest of the Scholastics; but the limits of natural ability, more particularly in respect of keeping the commandments and loving God above all, are carried too far. Luther's masters had here insisted with great emphasis on the argument of Scotus which they frequently and erroneously made to prove even more than was intended, viz. that as reason is capable of realising that man is able to fulfil the law and to render such love, and as the will is in a position to carry out all that reason puts before it, therefore man is able to fulfil both requirements.[2] In this argument insufficient attention has been paid to the difficulties which interior and exterior circumstances place in the way of fallen man. Theologians generally were very much divided in opinion concerning the possibility of fulfilling these requirements, and the better class of Scholastics denied it, declaring that the assistance of actual grace was requisite, which, however, they held, was given to all men of good will. Against the doctrine which Biel made his own, that man is able, without grace, to avoid all mortal sin,[3] keep all the commandments and love God above all things, not only Thomists, but even some of the Nominalists protested.[4]

Here again, according to Denifle, a serious error, committed by Biel regarding St. Thomas, must be pointed out, one, too, which may have had its effect upon Luther. Biel erroneously makes the holy Doctor say the opposite of what he really teaches when he ascribes to him the proposition: "*Homo potest cavere peccata mortalia* [*omnia*] *sine gratia.*" As Denifle reminds us again, it was "from this author that Luther drew in great part his knowledge of the earlier Scholastics."[5] Biel, however, in his sermons and instructions to preachers restricts the thesis of the possibility of loving God above all things through our natural powers. This, man is able to do, he says, "according to some writers, more especially in the state of paradisiacal innocence, but the act is not so perfect and not so easy as with God's grace and is without supernatural merit. God has so ordained that He will not accept any act as meritorious for heaven excepting only that which is elicited by grace" ("*ex gratia elicitum*").[6]

[1] Denifle, 1^1, p. 843 f.

[2] Occam, 1 Sent., dist. 1, q. 2, concl. 1: "*Voluntas potest se conformare dictamini rationis,*" etc.

[3] 2 Sent., dist. 28 (Brix. ed.), fol. 143′.

[4] Cp. Denifle, 1^1, p. 527, n. 3, p. 521.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 522, n. 2.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 541, n. 1. In spite of this, the teaching of the much-used Commentary on the Sentences continued to make itself felt, more particularly as the author enjoyed great consideration among the ecclesiastically minded, represented Nominalism at Tübingen, and was honoured as "the last of the Scholastics." It is worth while to quote the points of his teaching on grace from his book on the Sentences

The views of the Occamists or "Moderns" exhibited yet other weak points. Man, so they taught, is able to merit grace "*de congruo.*" They admitted, it is true, that grace was a supernatural gift, "*donata*" and "*gratuita,*" as they termed it, but they saw in man's natural love of God, and in his efforts, an adequate disposition for arriving at the state of saving grace.[1] The great Schoolmen on the contrary taught with St. Thomas, that the preparation and disposition for saving grace, i.e. all those good works which precede justification, do not originate in us but are due to the grace of Christ.

As for the teaching regarding natural and supernatural love of God, the keeping of the commandments and the predisposition for grace, Luther, in 1516, appears to have scarcely been acquainted with the opinion of any of the better representatives of Scholasticism, to whom he had access. It was only in 1518 that his attention was directed to Gregory of Rimini (General of the Augustinian Hermits in 1357), an eclectic whose views were somewhat unusual, and in this case, Luther, instead of making use of the good which was to be found in him in abundance, preferred to disregard his real opinion and to set him up as opposed to the teaching of the Schoolmen.[2] In 1519, labouring under a total misapprehension of the truth as regards both Gregory and the Schoolmen, he wrote: "the 'Moderns' agree with the Scotists and Thomists concerning free will and grace, with the one exception of Gregory of Rimini, whom they all condemn, but who rightly and effectively proves them to be worse than the Pelagians. He alone among all the Scholastics

with the glosses which Biel does not forget to mention. The principal passage is in 3 Sent., dist. 27, art. 3, dub. 2 to Q (according to the Lyons edition of 1514). Among the five propositions there set up, "*post. Domn. Pe. de Aliaco*" (d'Ailly), the first teaches the possibility of an act of love of God "*ex naturalibus.*" This is the reason: "*omni dictamini rationis rectæ voluntas ex suis naturalibus potest se conformare.*" The second proposition, however, says: "*Talis amoris actus non potest stare in viatore de potentia Dei ordinata sine gratia et charitate infusa,*" owing to the principle, "*Facienti quod est in se.*" That grace is every moment at man's disposal is proved from many Bible passages, yet any other more perfect disposition for grace than the natural act of love of God is not possible to man; the natural act in relation to grace is, however, only prior "*natura,*" not "*tempore.*" The third proposition runs: "*Charitas infusa tamen est prior in meriti ratione,*" etc. The fourth: with this natural act no mortal sins can exist. The fifth: "*Stante lege* [i.e. *præsente ordinatione Dei*] *nullus homo per pura naturalia potest implere præceptum de dilectione Dei super omnia. Probatur, quia lex iubet, quod actus cadens sub præcepto fiat in gratia, quæ est habitus supernaturalis.*"

[1] Biel, in 2 Sent., dist. 28, says of the natural love of God: "*Actus dilectionis Dei super omnia est dispositio ultimata et sufficiens ad gratiæ infusionem. . . . Gratia superadditur tanquam præviæ dispositioni,*" etc. But *ibid.*, fol. 143′, he says: "*Sic ad præparandum se ad donum Dei suscipiendum non indiget alio dono gratiæ, sed Deo ipsum movente* [*sc. concursu generali*]."

[2] Cp. Denifle, 1[1], p. 542 f.

agrees with Augustine and the Apostle Paul, against Carlstadt and all the new Schoolmen."[1] As though all Scholastics, old and new, had taught what Luther here attributes to them, viz. that "it is possible to gain heaven without grace," because, according to them, "a good though not meritorious work can be done" without grace. On the contrary, not the Thomists only, but also many other theologians were opposed to the thesis that the will could, of itself, always and everywhere, conform itself to the dictates of right reason and thus arrive at grace, but Gregory of Rimini, whom Luther favours so much as a Doctor of his own Order, declares that the keeping of the whole law was only possible through grace, and that therefore God had, with His law, imposed nothing impossible on man.[2] According to Luther, however, God had demanded of human nature what was impossible.

Occam and his school deviate somewhat from the rest of the Scholastics in the application of the well-known axiom: "*Facienti quod est in se Deus non denegat gratiam.*"[3]

While the better class of Scholastics understood it as meaning that God allows the man to arrive at saving grace and justification, who does his part with the help of actual grace, the schools of the decline interpreted the principle as implying that God would always give saving grace where there was adequate human and natural preparation; they thus came to make this grace a mere complement of man's natural effort; the effect of grace was accordingly purely formal; man's effort remained the same as before, but, by an act of favour, it was made conformable with God's "intention"; for it was God's will that no man should enjoy the Beatific Vision, without such grace, which, however, He never failed to bestow in response to human efforts. Some modern writers have described this view of grace to which the Nominalists were inclined, as a stamp imprinting on purely human effort a higher value. At any rate, according to the Occamists, man prepares for grace by natural acts performed under the ordinary concurrence of God (*concursus generalis*),[4] whereas, according to the better Scholastics, this preparation demanded, not only the ordinary, but also the particular concurrence of God, namely, actual grace; they maintained that ordinary concurrence was inadequate because it belonged to the natural order.

Actual grace was entirely neglected by the Occamists; the

[1] To Spalatin, August 15, 1519, "Briefwechsel," 2, p. 109: "*Is* [*Gregorius Ariminensis*] *solus inter scholasticos contra omnes scholasticos recentiores cum Carolostadio, id est Augustino et apostolo Paulo consentit.*" Cp. "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 84.

[2] In 2 Sent., fol. 91′ ad 2 (ed. Venet., 1503): "*Deus non præcipit homini ut talia opera faciat sine auxilio suo,*" etc.

[3] Cp. the scholastic passages in Denifle, 1^1, p. 555, n. 3. He leaves the explanation for the second volume, though A. Weiss does not give it. Denifle's remarks (p. 557 f.) on the practical application of the principle "*Facienti*" are worthy of attention.

[4] Denifle, 1^1, p. 564.

special help of God is, according to most of them, saving grace itself; actual grace, i.e. the divinely infused intermediary between man's natural and supernatural life, finds no place in their system. This explains, if we may anticipate a little, how it is that Luther pays so little attention to actual grace;[1] he has no need of it, because man, according to him, cannot keep the law at all without the (imputed) state of grace. It is unfortunate that Biel, in whom Luther trusted, should have misrepresented the actual teaching of true Scholasticism concerning the necessity and nature of grace, whether of actual or saving grace.

As early as 1515 Luther, with the insufficient knowledge he possessed, accused the Scholastics generally of teaching that "man by his natural powers is able to love God above all things, and substantially to do the works commanded, though not, indeed, according to the 'intention' of the lawgiver, i.e. not in the state of grace." "Therefore, according to them," he says, "grace was not necessary save by a new imposition demanding more than the law ('*per novam exactionem ultra legem*'); for, as they teach, the law is fulfilled by our own strength. Thus grace is not necessary to fulfil the law, save by reason of God's new exaction which goes beyond the law. Who will put up with these sacrilegious views?" Assuredly his indignation against Scholasticism would have been righteous had its teaching really been what he imagined. In the same way, and with similarly strong expressions, he generalises what he had learnt in his narrow world at Erfurt and Wittenberg, and ascribes to the whole of Christendom, to the Popes and all the schools, exactly what the Occamists said of the results of original sin being solely confined to the lower powers. Here, and in other connections too, he exclaims: "the whole Papacy has taught this, and all the schools of Sophists [Scholastics]." "Have they not denied that nature was ruined by sin when they assert that they are able to choose what is good according to the dictates of right reason?"[2]

From his antagonism to such views, an antagonism we find already in 1515, when he was preparing for his lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, sprang his own gloomy doctrine of the death of free will for good, and the poisoning of human nature by original sin. With its first appearance in the lectures mentioned we shall deal later.

[1] Denifle, 1, p. 670 f.

[2] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 19, p. 61 *seq.* Such views have often been adopted from Luther by Protestant theologians and historians. "The worth of Scholasticism," Denifle complains, 1^1, p. 845, "i.e. the scholastic doctrine as misunderstood and misrepresented by them, is judged of by them according to Luther's erroneous views which they receive as axioms, first principles and unalterable truths." In the second edition A. Weiss has struck out this sentence. Denifle, 1^1, p. 840, complains with reason that Biel is accepted as a reliable representative of Scholasticism. Cp. p. 552, n. 1, after showing his inaccuracy in one passage: "The reader may judge for himself what a false impression of St. Thomas's teaching would be gained from Biel."

Here a more general question must first receive an answer. How came the youthful Luther to absorb into his life the views above described without apparently shrinking in the least from the opposition to the Church's teaching manifest in them?

Various answers are forthcoming. In the first place, in consequence of his training which consisted too exclusively in the discussion of speculative controversies, he had come to see in the theological doctrines merely opinions of the schools, on which it was permissible to sit in judgment. He had forgotten that there existed a positive body of unassailable doctrine. Even when engaged in mercilessly attacking this body of doctrine he still appears to have been unaware of having outstepped the lines of permissible disputation. We cannot, however, altogether exonerate him from being in some degree conscious that in his attack on the Church he was treading dangerous ground. In the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans he goes so far as to declare, that the Church was almost destroyed ("*pene subversa*") by the teaching of the Scholastics, and that everything was full of Pelagian errors, because grace for the support of the will had been abolished. Things such as these and others of a like nature he could assuredly not have uttered without, in his calmer hours, asking himself how he could reconcile such a standpoint with his duty to the Church. It is true, however, that such quiet hours were exceptional in his case. There can be no doubt also that his idea of the Church and of the binding character of her doctrine was confused. In 1519 he had no hesitation in pointing to the action of other Doctors, who, before that date, had engaged in controversy with each other, in vindication of the tremendous struggle he had just commenced. I am only doing what they did; "Scotus, single-handed, opposed the opinions of all the schools and Doctors and gained the victory (?). Occam did the same, many others have done and are doing likewise up to the present day (?). If then these are at liberty to withstand all, why not I?"[1]

[1] In the "*Resolutiones super propositionibus Lipsiæ disputatis*," concl. 1; "Opp. Lat. var.," 3, p. 245 *sq.*; Weim. ed., 2, p. 403. It is of interest to see how he sums up his desire of ridding himself of the oppression of doctrinal rules in the cry: "*Volo liber esse*." Cp. *ibid.*, pp. 247, 404.

The second answer to the above question lies in the outward circumstances existing in his monastic home at the time of the beginning of his struggle. The members of his Congregation, most of whom were of Occam's school, were still greatly excited and divided by the quarrel going on in their midst regarding organisation and discipline. The Observantines with their praise of the old order and exercises were a thorn in the flesh of the other Augustinians, more lax and modern in their views, especially for Luther, who was at their head. A spirit of antagonism existed not merely between the different houses of the Order, but even in the houses themselves a struggle seems to have been carried on. On the one side there was a tenacious adherence to the older practices of the Order, on the other suspicion and reproaches were levelled against the innovations of the Observantines. The result was that the fiery young Professor, while inveighing against the Occamist theory of self-righteousness, thundered at the same time against the Observantines as living instances of the self-righteous and holy-by-works. Some of the reasons for this supposition have already been given, and more will be forthcoming when we consider the Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.[1]

War was to the Wittenberg Doctor even then an element of life. He found it going on, and encouraged it amongst the wearers of the Augustinian habit. The first and second "factions" in the Order, as Usingen calls them, i.e. the first division caused by the question of observance, and the second by the great controversy concerning faith, were, we may be sure, closely allied in Luther's mind; the controversy concerning observance may assuredly be reckoned amongst the outward causes which carried him along with them into the greater struggle and contributed for a time to hide from him the danger of his position. Though details are lacking of the resistance to Luther's first challenge to the theologians of his Order, to Scholasticism and the Church's doctrine, yet, as already said, we can see from the Commentary on Romans, from other unprinted early lectures, and also from the disputations and sermons, that the Order continued in a state of commotion, and that, as a matter of fact, the second "faction" was an outgrowth

[1] See above, p. 39 ff. Cp. passages quoted below, chapter vi. 3.

of the first.[1] The Observantines had to put up with hearing themselves styled by Luther "*iustitiarii*" and Pharisees; but probably there were others, even members of the Wittenberg University, perhaps some of those jurists and philosophers[2] to whom he refers in his Commentary on Romans, and whom he so cordially detested, who also were counted amongst the "*iustitiarii*," in fact all whom the outrageous assertions of their young colleague regarding the observance of precepts and regulations and against human freedom, roused to opposition.

To these two answers a third must be added, which turns upon the character of Luther in his youth. His extreme self-sufficiency blinded him, and his discovery of real errors in the theology in which he had been trained drove him in his impetuosity to imagine that he was called, and had the right, to introduce an entirely new theology. His searching glance had spied out real mistakes; his strength and boldness had resulted in the bringing to light of actual abuses; his want of consideration in the pointing out of blemishes in the Church had, in some degree, been successful and earned for him the applause of many; his criticism of theology was greeted as triumphant by his pupils, the more so as the Doctors he attacked were but feeble men unable to reply to so strong an indictment, or else living at a distance (in Erfurt). The growing self-consciousness, which expresses itself even in the form of his controversial language, must not be disregarded as a psychological fact in the problem, one, too, which also helped to blind him to the real outcome of his work.

Only the most extreme spirit of antagonism could have led the Monk to make, in addition to his other harsh exaggerated charges against Scholasticism, the following assertion, to which, as it is important for the origin of Lutheranism, some attention must be paid. He says the doctrine is false that righteousness which can be acquired

[1] See above, p 80. According to Usingen the "*primaria factio nostræ unionis*" (i.e. of the Saxon Congr. of Augustinians) was that which Lang led astray "*contra nativum conventum suum.*" The "*secundaria factio*" was the Reformation "*qua pœne desolata est nostra unio.*" See Usingen, "Sermo de S. cruce" (Erfordiæ, 1524); N. Paulus, Usingen, p. 16, n. 5.

[2] Cp. Pollich, in Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 87. See above, p. 86.

by means of good works (of the natural order) is even conceivable; this was invented by Aristotle; this righteousness of the philosophers and jurists has penetrated into the Church, while, as a matter of fact, owing to the naughtiness, nay, corruption of mankind, resulting from original sin, it was a monstrosity and an abomination in God's sight; the scholastic distinctions of distributive and commutative justice, etc., "were also due to blindness of spirit and mere human wisdom"; the Scholastics have put this infamous, purely human righteousness in the place of righteousness by grace, which is of value in God's sight; they have said there is no original sin, and have acted as though all men did not feel concupiscence within themselves very strongly; they have represented righteousness as the fruit of our natural efforts, and in consequence of this people now believe that righteousness may be had through Indulgences costing two pence, i.e. through works of the very slightest worth! But "the Apostle teaches," he says, "*Corde creditur ad iustitiam*, i.e. not by works, or wisdom, or study, not by riches and honours can man attain to righteousness. . . . That is a new way to righteousness, against, and far above, Aristotle . . . and his political, God-forsaken righteousness."[1] Yet, according to him, the Scholastics knew no better. "They speak like Aristotle in his 'Ethics,' who makes . . . righteousness consist in works, as also its attainment and its loss."[2]

Is it possible that the writer of the above sentences was really incapable of distinguishing between the natural and the supernatural in moral good according to the fundamental principle of true Scholasticism? Was Luther really ignorant of the theses which run through the whole of Scholasticism such as this of St. Thomas: "*Donum gratiæ excedit omnem præparationem virtutis humanæ*"?[3] The great lack of discrimination which underlies the above attack is characteristic of Luther in his youth and of his want of consideration in the standpoint he assumed. He starts from some justifiable objection to the nominalistic theology—which really was inadequate on the subject of the preparation for supernatural righteousness—sets up against it his own doctrine of fallen man and his salvation, and, then, without further ado, ascribes an absolutely fanciful idea of righteousness to the Church and the whole of Scholasti-

[1] Fol. 233′. Denifle-Weiss, 1², p. 528, n. 1; "Rom. Schol.," p. 244.
[2] Fol. 144. Denifle-Weiss, 1², p. 526, n. 3; "Rom. Schol," p. 108.
[3] 1–2, q. 112, a. 3.

cism. What he failed to distinguish, St. Thomas, Thomism, and all true Scholastics distinguished with very great clearness. Aquinas draws a sharp line of demarcation between the civil virtue of righteousness and the so-called infused righteousness of the act of justification. He anticipates, so to speak, Luther's objection and his confusion of one idea with another, and teaches that by the repeated performance of exterior works an inward habit is without doubt formed in consequence of which man is better disposed to act rightly, as Aristotle teaches in his "Ethics"; "but," he says, "this only holds good of human righteousness, by which man is disposed to what is humanly good ('*iustitia humana ad bonum humanum*'); by human works the habit of such righteousness can be acquired. But the righteousness which counts in the eyes of God (i.e. supernatural righteousness) is ordained to the Divine good, namely, to future glory, which exceeds human strength ('*iustitia quæ habet gloriam apud Deum; ordinata ad bonum divinum*') . . . wherefore man's works are of no value for producing the habit of this righteousness, but the heart of man must first of all be inwardly justified by God, so that he may do the works which are of worth for eternal glory."[1]

So speaks the most eminent of the Schoolmen in the name of the true theology of the Middle Ages.

For Luther, who brings forward the above arbitrary objection in his Commentary on Romans, it would have been very easy to have made use of the explanation just given, for it is found in St. Thomas's Commentary on this very Epistle. Luther, one would have thought, would certainly have consulted this work for his interpretation of the Epistle, were it only on account of its historical interest, and even if it had not been the best work on the subject which had so far appeared. But no, it seems that he never looked into this Commentary, nor even into the older glosses of Peter Lombard on the Epistle to the Romans, then much in use; in the latter he would at once have found the refutation of the charge he brought against the Scholastics of advocating the doctrine of Aristotle on righteousness by works, as the gloss to the classic passage (Romans iii. 27) runs as follows: "For righteousness is not by works ('*non ex operibus est iustitia*'), but works are the result of righteousness, and therefore we do not say: 'the righteousness of works, but the works of righteousness.'"[2]

He does not even trouble to uphold the frivolous accusation that the Schoolmen had been acquainted only with Aristotelian righteousness, but actually refutes it by another objection. He finds fault with the "scholastic theologians" for having, as he

[1] S. Thom., "in Ep. ad Romanos," lect. 1 (on Rom. iv. 2).

[2] In Rom. iii. 27: "*Non enim ex operibus est iustitia, sed ipsa sunt ex iustitia* (see in this connection Luther's statement, p. 43) *ideoque non iustitiam operum sed opera iustitiæ dicimus.*" Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, pp. 528–30.

says in the Commentary on Romans, "held the doctrine of the expulsion of sin and the infusion of grace" to be a single change.[1] He hereby admits that they were familiar with something more than mere Aristotelian righteousness, for in Aristotle there is certainly no question of any infusion of grace. But Luther frequently speaks in this way of the distinction which the Scholastics made between acquired and infused righteousness.

The changeableness and inconstancy of his assertions regarding the doctrines of the Scholastics is quite remarkable. He makes no difficulty about admitting later, against his previous statements, that the Scholastics did not teach that man was able to love God above all things merely by his own strength; this was the teaching only of the Scotists and the "Moderns" (i.e. Nominalists or Occamists).[2] At that time he was perhaps better acquainted with Biel, who instances Thomas and Bonaventure in opposition to this doctrine.[3] Luther was also careless in the accounts he gave even of the theology of his own circle, viz. that of the Occamists, and the injustice he does Scholasticism as a whole, he repeats against his own school by exaggerating its faults or suppressing the necessary distinctions in order to be the better able to refute its theses by the Bible and St. Augustine. As therefore it is impossible to form an opinion on Scholasticism as a whole from Luther's assertions, so we cannot trust his account even of his own masters, in whose works he thinks himself so well versed.

He is, for instance, neglecting a distinction when he repeatedly asserts (that Occam, his "Master," denied the biblical truth) that the Holy Ghost is necessary for the performance of a good work.) As a matter of fact, the Occamists, like the Scotists, did not here differ essentially from the Thomists, although differences are apparent in their teaching on the supernatural habit, and on the preparation for the attainment of this supernatural righteousness, i.e. for justification.[4] He is wronging his own "*factio occamica*" when, from its teaching that man could, by his natural powers, acquire a love of God beyond all things, he at

[1] Fol. 158. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 531, n. 1, 2; "Rom. Schol.," p. 130: "*Hoc totum scholastici theologi unam dicunt mutationem: expulsionem peccati et infusionem gratiæ.*"

[2] See Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 542 ff.

[3] Denifle, 1^1, p. 520, n. 1.

[4] On Occam's teaching on the supernatural habit see below, p. 154. Occam, 2 Sent., q. 26, says, it seems "*quod iustitia originalis dicat aliquid absolutum superadditum puris naturalibus.*" Biel speaks, 2 Sent., dist. 30, q. 1, concl. 3, of the "*donum supernaturale.*"

once infers that it declared infused grace to be superfluous,[1] and further, when, for instance, he asserted that the axiom quoted above, and peculiarly beloved of the Occamists, "*Facienti quod est in se Deus non denegat gratiam,*" was erroneous, as though it placed a "wall of iron" between man and the grace of God.[2] No Occamist understood the axiom in the way he wishes to make out.

Luther went so far in his gainsaying of the Occamist doctrine of the almost unimpaired ability of man for purely natural good, that he arrived at the opposite pole and began to maintain that there was no such thing as vitally good acts on man's part; that man as man does not act in doing what is good, but that grace alone does everything. The oldest statements of this sort are reserved for the quotations to be given below from his Commentary on Romans. We give, however, a few of his later utterances to this effect. They prove that the crass denial of man's doing anything good continued to characterise him in later life as much as earlier.

In the Gospel homilies contained in his "Postils," he teaches the people that it was a "shameful doctrine of the Popes, universities, and monasteries" to say "we ought by the strength of our free will to begin [exclusive of God's help ?] by seeking God, coming to Him, running after Him and earning His grace." "Beware, beware," he cries, "of this poison; it is the merest devil's doctrine by which the whole world is led astray. . . . You ask: How then must we begin to become pious, and what must we do that God may begin in us? Reply: What, don't you hear that in you there is no doing, no beginning to be pious, as little as there is any continuing and ending? God only is the beginning, furthering and ending. All that you begin is sin and remains sin, let it look as pretty as it will; you can do nothing but sin, do how you will . . . you must remain in sin, do what you will, and all is sin whatever you do alone of your free will; for if you were able of your own free will not to sin, or to do what is pleasing to God, of what use would Christ be to you?"[3]

Elsewhere, on account of the supposed inability of man, he teaches a sort of Quietism: "Is anyone to become converted, pious and a Christian, we don't set about it; no praying, no fasting assists it; it must come from heaven and from grace alone. . . . Whoever wants to become pious, let him not say: 'I will set about doing good works in order to obtain grace,' but,

[1] Cp. in Gal. 1, p. 188 *seq.*
[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 272.
[3] Erl. ed., 10^2, p. 11.

'I will wait to see whether God by His word will give me His grace and His spirit.' "[1]

And on another occasion his words are still stronger: "The gospel tells us only to open our bosom and take, and says: 'Behold what God has done for you, He made His Son become flesh for you.' Believe this and accept it and you will be saved."[2]

Seen in the light of such passages, it becomes clear that the following must not be taken as a mere expression of humility, but as a deprecation of good deeds. Already, in 1519, Luther says: "Man, like a cripple with disabled hands and feet, must invoke grace as the artisan of works ('*operum artificem*')."[3] The difficulty is that this very invocation is itself a vital, though surely not a sinful, action. Would not a man have been justified in saying even of this preliminary act: I will wait, I may not begin? "Luther was scarcely acquainted with the doctrine of a wholesome Scholasticism and with that of the Church concerning the mysterious reciprocal action of grace and free will in man. He was qualified to oppose the Occamist teaching, but was incapable of replacing it by the true doctrine."[4]

Against the prevalent doctrine on the powers of man, Luther, among other verses from the Bible, brought forward John xv. 5: "Without me ye can do nothing." A remark on his use of this supposed scriptural proof may serve to conclude what we have said of the far-reaching negative influence of Occamism on the youthful Luther.

The decisive words of the Redeemer: "Without me ye can do nothing," so Luther says to his friend Spalatin, had hitherto been understood quite wrongly. And, in proof of this, he adduces the interpretation which he must have heard in his school, or read in the authors who were there in repute: "Our masters," he says, "have made a distinction between the general and the particular concurrence of God" (*concursus generalis* and *concursus specialis* or *gratia*); with the general concurrence man was able, so they taught, to do what is naturally good, i.e. what they considered to be good; with the particular, however, that which is beyond nature ("*quæ gratiæ sunt et supra naturam*"), and meritorious for heaven. To this statement of the perfectly correct teaching of his masters he adds, however, the following:

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 24, p. 244, in 1527.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[3] *Ibid.*, 2, p. 420.
[4] Denifle, 1^1, p. 561. In spite of this, some Protestant critics are under the impression that Denifle has made of Luther a faithful follower of Occam and that he "gives him short shrift as a confirmed Occamist."

they taught that "with our powers we are able, under the general Divine concurrence, to prepare ourselves for the obtaining of grace, i.e. for the obtaining of the particular concurrence, hence that we can '*inchoative*' do something, to gain merit and the vision of God, notwithstanding the express teaching of Christ, though we are indeed unable to do this '*perfective*,' without the particular assistance of grace."[1]

What Luther says here applies at most to the Nominalists; according to Occam's school the preparation for sanctifying grace takes place by purely natural acts,[2] and accordingly this school was not disposed to take Christ's words about eternal life too literally. Although healthy Scholasticism knows nothing of this and holds fast to the literal meaning of the words "Without me ye can do nothing," viz. nothing for eternal life (the absolute necessity of the general concurrence is taken for granted), yet Luther, in all simplicity, assures his friend that the whole past had taken the words of Christ in the sense he mentions ("*Sic est hucusque autoritas ista exposita et intellecta.*")[3] This doctrine he detests so heartily, that he sets up the very extreme opposite in his new system. The general Divine concursus, he says in his letter to Spalatin quoted above, certainly leads nature on to work of itself, but it cannot do otherwise than "seek its own and misuse the gifts of God." Nature merely provides stuff for the "punishing fire," however "good and moral its works may appear outwardly." Hence, according to him, there is no distinction between general and particular concurrence, between the inchoative and the perfective act; without Christ, and "before we have been healed by His grace," there is absolutely nothing but mischief and sin.

By "grace," here and elsewhere, he means the state of justifying grace. Whereas true Scholasticism recognises actual grace, which assists man even before justification, this is as good as excluded by Luther already in the beginning of his theological change. Why? Partly because he cannot make use of it as he refers everything to justifying faith, partly because the Occamists, his masters, erroneously reduced the particular influence of God almost entirely to sanctifying grace, and neglected or denied actual grace.

In the latter respect we perceive one of the positive effects of Occamism on Luther. This leads us to another aspect of the present theme.

[1] On April 13, 1520, "Briefwechsel," 2, p. 379 f.

[2] Cp. Denifle, 1^1, p. 564.

[3] Mathesius, "Tischreden" (ed. Kroker), p. 172. "*Scholastica theologia in hoc articulo consentit, hominem ex puris naturalibus posse mereri gratiam de congruo.*" Words of Luther in 1540. As a good Occamist he himself had taught the same in his first exposition of the Psalms. See above, p. 75.

3. Positive Influence of Occamism

We have so far been considering the precipitate and excessive antagonism shown at an early date by Luther towards the school of Occam, especially towards its anthropological doctrines; we have also noted its influence on his new heretical principles, particularly on his denial of man's natural ability for good. Now we must turn our attention to the positive influence of the Occamist teaching upon his new line of thought, for Luther's errors are to be ascribed not only to the negative, but also to the positive effects of his school.

His principal dogma, that of justification, must first be taken into consideration.

This he drew up entirely on the lines of a scheme handed down to him by his school. It is no uncommon thing to see even the most independent and active minds tearing themselves away from a traditional train of thought in one particular, and yet continuing in another to pursue the accustomed course, so great is the power which a custom acquired at school possesses over the intellect. The similarity existing between Luther's and Occam's doctrine of the imputation of righteousness isquite remarkable. Occam had held it, at least as possible, that a righteousness existed which was merely imputed; at any rate, it was only because God so willed it that sanctifying grace was necessary in the present order of things. He and his school had, as a matter of fact, no clear perception of the supernatural habit as a supernatural principle of life in the soul. According to the Occamist Peter d'Ailly, whom Luther repeatedly quotes in his notes on Peter Lombard, reason cannot be convinced of the necessity of the supernatural habit; all that this is supposed to do can be done equally well by a naturally acquired habit; an unworthy man might be found worthy of eternal life without any actual change taking place in him; only owing to an acceptation on God's part ("*a sola divina acceptatione*") does the soul become worthy of eternal life, not on account of any created cause (therefore not on account of love and grace).[1] "The whole work of

[1] Cp. the passages from Occam, d'Ailly and Biel in Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 591 ff. To the texts there quoted from Occam must be added those from 3 Sent., q. 8, A., where, "*de necessitate habituum supernaturalium*," he establishes three conclusions: 1. Their necessity

salvation here becomes external; it is mechanical, not organic."[1]

If Luther, in consequence of his study of these Occamist doctrines, fell into error regarding the supernatural, the consequences were even worse when, with his head full of such Occamistic ideas, he proceeded to expound the most difficult of the Pauline Epistles, with their dim and mysterious handling of grace, and, at the same time, to ponder on the writings of St. Augustine,[2] that deep-thinking Doctor of grace. Such studies could only breed fresh confusion in his mind.

cannot be proved by natural reason. 2. The necessity of these habits cannot be inferred from the article of faith, that eternal salvation is bestowed on man on account of his merits. 3. We can in addition to each supernatural habit possess also a natural one corresponding to it and which impels us to similar acts. Yet, as he says in concluding, the passage 1 Cor. xiii. 13: "*Nunc autem manent fides*," etc., teaches that the habits exist in the righteous and remain in the next life. But at the letter D he returns to the subject: one who is not baptised and receives instruction can arrive at the love of God: "*dilectio non infusa, igitur acquisita*"; the acts of the will which we produce are natural ones, therefore the habit also is natural which they induce: "*non obstante quod sit in voluntate habitus supernaturalis propter auctoritatem [scripturæ], adhuc oportet ponere habitum naturaliter acquisitum.*" Finally, under T, after again recognising the "*fides infusa, propter auctoritatem scripturæ*," yet, as a matter of fact, he says, though the habits might be acquired naturally, they are frequently infused by God, and therefore called rightly "*dona Dei*" and "*habitus infusi.*" The same habit, however, cannot be merely naturally acquired, but also as such "*habere effectus eiusdem speciei vel rationis*"; the supernatural habits might nevertheless appear absolutely superfluous ("*viderentur totaliter superfluere*") were it not for biblical authority; "*non sunt ponendi propter aliquam rationem evidentem.*" Thus, on the one hand, the strongest attempts to abolish the habits, and, on the other, a holding fast to the teaching of the Bible. Nothing is more incorrect than to accuse Occam of a simple surrender of the supernatural qualities and a direct destruction of the supernatural order. Even the index to Occam's Commentary on the Sentences shows under the word *habitus* how strictly he distinguishes between *habitus infusus* and *habitus acquisitus*, and how he accepts both and teaches, for instance, that the natural habits may remain even after the destruction of the supernatural.

[1] See Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 594.

[2] In Augustine the doctrine of imputation does not appear. Cp. Mausbach, "Die Ethik des hl. Augustinus" (1909), 2, p. 187, who, after pointing out this fact, remarks: "This doctrine of imputation was actually set up by Luther, whose mind was dominated by Nominalism." Luther was able to introduce the continuance of original sin into Augustine's writings only by forcing their meaning (see above, his alteration of *concupiscentia* into *peccatum*, p. 98). From the standpoint of the continuance of original sin Luther, already in his Commentary on Romans, attacks the supernatural habit of grace. Cp. Braun, "Die Bedeutung der Concupiscenz bei Luther," p. 310.

The result was as follows: regarding imputation, i.e. one of the foundations of his theology, Luther quotes Occam in such a way as to represent him as teaching as a fact what he merely held to be possible. He declares sanctifying grace to be not merely superfluous, but also non-existent, and erects the theory of Divine acceptation into a dogma. This alone would be sufficient to demonstrate his positive dependence on Occamism.

The theories of acceptation, which were peculiar to the Occamists and which Luther took over—though what they called by this name he prefers to call imputation—had not only met with approval, but had also been widely applied by this school.

According to d'Ailly, evil is not evil on account of its special nature, but only because God forbids it ("*præcise, quia lege prohibitum*"); a law or rule of conduct does not exist by nature, for God might have willed otherwise ("*potest non esse lex*"); He has, however, decreed it in the present order of things. Similar views appear in Luther's Commentary on Romans, where little regard is paid to the objective foundation of the moral law.[1]

According to Occam, God acts according to whim. D'Ailly actually discovers in him the view that it is not impossible to suppose that the created will might deserve well by hating God, because God might conceivably command this. In Luther we at least find the opinion that God knows of no grounds for His action and might therefore work what is evil in man, which then, of course, would not be evil in God in consequence of His not imputing it to Himself as such.

The Divine imputation or *pactum* plays its part in the Occamistic sense in Luther's earliest theological lectures on the Psalms. "Faith and Grace," he there says, "by which we are justified to-day, would not justify us of themselves save as a consequence of the '*pactum Dei*.'" In the same place he teaches that, as a result of such an "agreement and promise," those who, before Christ, fulfilled the law according to the letter, acquired a supernatural merit *de congruo*.[2]

Luther's dependence on Occamism caused him, as Denifle expresses it, to be always "on bad terms with the supernatural";[3] we must not, however, take this as meaning that Luther did not do his best, according to his own lights, to support and to encourage faith in revelation, both in himself and in others.

We shall see how in the case of justification he regards faith, and then his particular "faith only" as the one

[1] Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 2, p. 305, n. 4.
[2] Cp. Loofs, "Dogmengesch.," [4], p. 699.
[3] Denifle-Weiss, 1[2], p. 510.

factor, not, however, the faith which is animated by charity, and this because, with the Occamists, he rejects all supernatural habits. He extols the value of faith on every occasion at the expense of the other virtues.[1]

The positive influence of Occam on Luther is also to be traced in the domain of faith and knowledge. Luther imagines he is fortifying faith by laying stress on its supposed opposition to reason, a tendency which is manifest already in his Commentary on Romans. In this Occam and his school were his models.

The saying that there is much in faith which is "plainly against reason and the contrary of which is established by faith"[2] comes from d'Ailly. Occam found the arguments for the existence of one God inadequate.[3] Biel has not so much to say against these proofs, but he does hold that the fact that one only God exists is a matter of faith not capable of being absolutely proved by reason.[4]

Occam, whom Biel praises as "*multum clarus et latus*," made faith to know almost everything, but the results achieved by reason to be few and unreliable.[5] He employed the function of reason, of a caustic reason to boot, in order to raise doubts, or to exercise the mind at the expense of the truths of revelation; yet in the positive recognition of articles of faith he allowed reason to recede into the background. In any case he prepared the way for the saying, that a thing may be false in theology and yet true in philosophy, and *vice versa*, a proposition condemned at the 5th Lateran Council by the Constitution *Apostolici Regiminis* of Leo X.[6]

Luther came to state clearly that "it was quite false to say the same thing was true in philosophy and also in theology"; whoever taught this was fettering the articles of faith "as prisoners to the judgment of reason."[7] We shall have to speak later of many examples of the violent and hateful language with which he disparages reason in favour of faith. His love for the Bible at an early period strengthened in him the idea—one which the Occamists often advanced in the course of the dialectic criticism to which they subjected the truths of religion—that after all, the decisions of faith are not the same as those of the

[1] Denifle-Weiss, *ibid.*, p. 606.

[2] In 2 Sent. in princ.: "*Multa, quæ apparent manifeste contra rationem, et quorum opposita sunt consona fidei.*"

[3] Quodlib. 1, q. 1: "*Non potest demonstrative probari, quod tantum unus est Deus.*"

[4] 1 Sent., dist. 2, q. 10, concl. 3, F.

[5] Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 608.

[6] Raynald., "Annal.," *an.* 1513, n. 92 *sq.*; Mansi, "Coll. conc.," 32, p. 842 *seq.*

[7] Drews, "Disputationen Luthers," p 487, No. 4–6, from the Disputation on January 11, 1539.

mind, and that we must make the best of this fact. Luther even in his Commentary on Romans is ever ready to decry the "wisdom of the flesh," which is there described as constantly interfering with faith.

The union of faith and knowledge, of which true Scholasticism was proud, never appealed to Luther.

The Occamists had also been before him in attacking Aristotle. The fact that many esteemed this philosopher too highly gave rise in their camp to bitter and exaggerated criticism, and to excessive abuse of the Stagirite. Against the blind Aristotelians d'Ailly had already written somewhat unkindly : " In philosophy, i.e. in the teaching of Aristotle, there are no, or but few, convincing proofs . . . we must call the philosophy or teaching of Aristotle an opinion rather than a science."[1] Gregory of Rimini, whom Luther made use of and who was not ignorant of Occamism, says that Aristotle had shockingly gone astray ("*turpissime erravit*") on many points, and, in some, had contradicted himself.

Such were the minds that inspired Luther at the time when he was already making for a theological goal different from that of the " rationalists," wise ones of this world, and loquacious wiseacres, as he calls all the Scholastics indiscriminately in his Commentary on Romans. Wherever theology has made a right and moderate use of philosophical proofs, philosophy has always shown itself as the *ancilla theologiæ*, and has been of assistance in theological development. After expelling reason from the domain of supernatural knowledge Luther was forced to fall back on feeling and inward experience, i.e. on elements, which, owing to their inconstancy and variability, did not deserve the place he gave them. This was as harmful to faith as the denial of the rights of reason.

Gerson had lamented, concerning the misuse of philosophical criticism in religious matters, that the methods of the Nominalists made faith grow cold,[2] and it may be that Luther had experienced these effects in himself, since, in his lectures on the Psalms, he acknowledges and regrets the cooling of his life of faith.[3] But, surely, in the same way the predominance of feeling and so-called religious experience was also to be regretted, as it crippled faith and deprived it of a sure guide.

[1] In 1 Sent., q. 3, a. 3: "*nullæ vel paucæ sunt rationes evidentes demonstrativæ . . . magis opinio quam scientia, et ideo valde sunt reprehensibiles qui nimis tenaciter adhærent auctoritati Aristotelis.*"

[2] "*Superbia scholasticos a pœnitentia et fide viva præpediens,*" etc. " Opp." (Antv., 1706), p. 90.

[3] See above, p. 70.

Staupitz spoke from feeling and not from a clear perception of facts when, in his admiration, he praised Luther as exalting Christ and His grace. He applauded Luther, as the latter says "at the outset of his career": "This pleases me in your teaching, that it gives honour and all to God alone and nothing to man. We cannot ascribe to God sufficient honour and goodness, etc."[1] Staupitz sought for enlightenment in a certain mysticism akin to Quietism, instead of in real Scholasticism. On such mystic by-ways Luther was sure to fall in with him, and, as a matter of fact, from the point of view of a false mysticism, Luther was to denounce "rationalising wisdom" and to speak in favour of religious feeling even more strongly than he had done before.

Under the influence of both these elements, a quietistic mysticism and an antagonism to reason in matters of faith, his scorn for all natural works grew. This made it easier for him to regard the natural order of human powers as having been completely upset by original sin. More and more he comes to recognise only an appearance of natural virtues; to consider them as the poisonous blossoms of that unconquerable selfishness which lies ever on the watch in the heart of man, and is only to be gradually tamed by the justifying grace of God. The denial of all freedom, under the ban of sin, little by little becomes for him the principal thing, the "*summa causa*," which, as he says in so many words, he has to defend.[2] Beside the debasement of reason and the false fancies of his mysticism, stood as a worthy companion the religion of the enslaved will; this we find present in his mind from the beginning, and at a later period it obtained a lasting monument in the work "*De servo arbitrio*," which Luther regarded as the climax of his theology.[3]

But there are other connecting-links between Occamism and the errors of the young Monk.

[1] So Luther relates, In Gal. 2, p. 103.

[2] "*Totius summæ christianarum rerum.*" So the Weim. ed., 18, p. 614. "Opp. Lat. var.," 7, p. 132, in "*De servo arbitrio.*"

[3] This is the work which Albert Ritschl, the well-known Protestant theologian, summed up as follows on account of the contradictions which it contained: "Luther's work, '*De servo arbitrio*,' is, and remains, an unfortunate piece of bungling." "Die christl. Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung," 1², Bonn, 1882, p. 221. See below, vol. ii., xiv. 3.

According to Occam's school the purely spiritual attributes of God cannot be logically proved; it does not consider it as proved merely by reason that God is the last and final end of man, and that outside of Him there is no real human happiness, nor even, according to Occam himself, that "any final cause exists on account of which all things happen";[1] not only, according to him, must we be on our guard against any idea that reason can arrive at God as the origin of happiness and as the end of salvation, but even His attributes we must beware of examining philosophically. God's outward action knows no law, but is purely arbitrary. Thus Occamism, with its theory of the arbitrary Divine Will, manifesting itself in the act of "acceptation" or imputation, was more likely to produce a servile feeling of dependence on God than any childlike relationship; with this corresponded the feeling of the utter worthlessness of man's own works in relation to imputation, which, absolutely speaking, might have been other than it is.

It is highly probable that the bewildered soul of the young Augustinian greedily lent an ear to such ideas, and laboured to make them meet his own needs. The doubts as to predestination which tormented him were certainly not thereby diminished, but rather increased. How could the idea of an arbitrary God have been of any use to him? In all likelihood the apprehensiveness and obscurity which colours his idea of God, in the Commentary on Romans, was due to notions imbibed by him in his school. Luther was later on to express this conception in his teaching regarding the "*Deus absconditus*," on whom, as the source of all predestination (even to hell), we may not look, and whom we may only timidly adore. Already in the Commentary referred to he teaches the absolute predestination to hell of those who are to be damned, a doctrine which no Occamist had yet ventured to put forward.

Among the other points of contact between Luther's teaching and Occamism, or Nominalism, we may mention, as a striking example, his denial of Transubstantiation, which he expressly associates with one of the theses of the Occamist d'Ailly. Here his especial hatred of the school of St. Thomas comes out very glaringly.

[1] "*Non potest probari sufficienter, quod Deus sit causa finalis.*" Quodlib. 4, q. 2. Other Nominalists go still further.

Luther himself confesses later how the Occamist school had led him to this denial.[1] When studying scholastic theology he had read in d'Ailly that the mystery of Christ's presence in the Sacrament of the Altar would be much more comprehensible could we but assume that He was present *with* the bread, i.e. without any change of substance, but that this was impossible owing to the unassailable contrary teaching of the Church on Transubstantiation. The same idea is found in Occam, but of this Luther was unaware. Luther criticises d'Ailly's appeal to the Church, and then proceeds: "I found out later on what sort of Church it is which sets up such a doctrine; it is the Thomistic, the Aristotelian. My discovery made me bolder, and therefore I decided for Consubstantiation. The opinions of the Thomists, even though approved by Pope or Council, remain opinions and do not become articles of faith, though an angel from heaven should say the contrary; what is asserted apart from Scripture and without manifest revelation, cannot be believed."[2] Yet in point of fact the term "*Transsubstantiatio*" had been first used in a definition by the Œcumenical Lateran Council of 1215 to express the ancient teaching of the Church regarding the change of substance. According to what Luther here says, St. Thomas of Aquin (whose birth occurred some ten years later) was responsible for the introduction of the word and what it stood for, in other words for the doctrine itself. A little later Luther solemnly reaffirmed that "Transubstantiation is purely Thomistic" (1522).[3] "The Decretals settled the word, but there is no doubt that it was introduced into the Church by those coarse blockheads the Thomists" (1541).[4] Hence either he did not know of the Council or its date, or he did not know when St. Thomas wrote; in any case he was ignorant of the relation in which the teaching of St. Thomas on this point stood to the teaching of earlier ages. He was unaware of the historical fact of the general adoption of the term since the end of the eleventh century;[5] he was not acquainted with the theologians who taught in the interval between the Lateran Council and St. Thomas, and who used both the name and the idea of Transubstantiation, and among whom were Albertus Magnus and Alexander of Hales; he cannot even have noted the title of the Decretal from which he derived the knowledge of the existence of the doctrine of Transubstantiation in the Middle Ages, for it is headed: "*Innocentius tertius in concilio generali.*"

That he should have made St. Thomas responsible for the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and that so rudely,

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 6, p. 508; "Opp. Lat. var.," 5, p. 29, "De captivitate babylonica," 1520.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] "Opp. Lat. var.," 6, p. 423; Weim. ed., 10, 2, p. 204. *Contra regem Henricum.*

[4] To Prince George or John of Anhalt, June, 1541, "Briefe" (de Wette), 6, p. 284.

[5] Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 614 ff.

appears to be a result of his ever-increasing hatred for Aquinas. In the first period of his change of view, his opposition was to the Scholastics in general, but from 1518 onwards his assaults are on St. Thomas and the Thomists. Why was this? A Thomist, Prierias of Rome, was the author of the first pamphlet against him; another Thomist, Cardinal Cajetan, had summoned him to appear before his tribunal; both belonged to the Dominican Order, in which Thomas, the great Dominican Saint, was most enthusiastically studied. Tetzel, too, was a Dominican and a Thomist. Any examination of Luther's development cannot but pay attention to this circumstance, though it is true it does not belong to his earliest period. It makes many of the outbreaks of anger to which he gave way later more comprehensible. In 1522 Luther pours out his ire on the "asinine coarseness of the Thomists," on "the Thomist hogs and donkeys," on the "stupid audacity and thickheadedness of the Thomists," who "have neither judgment, nor insight, nor industry in their whole body."[1] His theology, we may remark, largely owed its growth to this quarrel and the contradiction it called forth.

Luther's tendency to controversial theology and his very manner of proceeding, in itself far less positive than negative, bore the Occamist stamp. It is true he was predisposed this way by nature, yet the criticism of the nominalistic school, the acuteness and questioning attitude of Occam and d'Ailly, lent an additional impulse to his putting forth like efforts. We shall not be mistaken in assuming that his doctrinal arbitrariness was, to a certain extent at least, a result of the atmosphere of decadent theology in which his lot had been cast. The paradoxes to which he so frequently descends are manifestly modelled on the antilogies with which Occam's works abound; like Occam, he frequently leaves the reader in doubt as to his meaning, or speaks later in quite a different way from what he did before. Occam's garrulity was, so it would appear, infectious. Luther himself, while praising his acuteness, blames Occam for the long amplifications to which he was addicted.[2] On

[1] "Opp. Lat. var." 6, pp. 397, 399, 400, 425; Weim. ed., 10, 2, pp. 188, 189, 190, 206. *Contra regem Henricum.*

[2] Lauterbach, "Tagebuch," p. 18. After speaking of Occam as "*ingeniosissimus*" he says: "*illius studium erat, res dilatare et amplificare in infinitum.*"

more than one occasion Luther reproaches himself for his discursiveness and superabundance of rhetoric. Even the Commentaries he wrote in his youth on the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans prove to the reader that his self-reproof was well deserved, whilst the second Commentary also manifests that spirit of criticism and arbitrariness, bold to overstep the barriers of the traditional teaching of the Church, which he had likewise received from his Occamist masters.

Various attempts have been made to point out other theological influences, besides those considered above, as having worked upon Luther in his earlier years.

It would carry us too far to discuss these opinions individually, the more so that there are scarcely sufficient data to hand to lead to a decision. Luther himself, who should be the principal witness, is very reticent concerning the authors and the opinions he made use of in forming his own ideas. He would rather give the impression that everything had grown up spontaneously from his own thought and research; that his teaching sprang into being from himself alone without the concurrence of outsiders, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. He assumes to himself with the utmost emphasis the precedence in the discovery of the Gospel, for instance, against rivals such as Carlstadt and Zwingli; he alone had read his Bible, and Carlstadt was quite unacquainted with it; he only, with illumination from above, had discovered everything.

As we find in his writings so few allusions to outside influences—save to that of Occamism—it does not appear worth while to philosophise as to whether he had, or had not, been touched by the Gallicanism which was in the air. It is very doubtful whether he, in the comparative seclusion of his little world of Erfurt and Wittenberg, came to any extent under this influence, especially as his studies were so cursory and brief and confined within such narrow limits. The Gallican tendencies did not find in Germany anything like so fruitful a soil as in France. It is true that Luther soon after his change of opinions was capable of rivalling any Paris professor of Gallican sympathies in his depreciation of the Holy See. Hence though no immediate influence on Luther can be allowed to Gallicanism, yet the fact

remains that the prevalent anti-Roman tendencies greatly contributed to the wide acceptance of the Lutheran schism in Germany, and even beyond its borders.

Again, that Luther, as has been asserted, after having tasted the food provided by Nominalism, was so disgusted as to rush to the opposite extreme in Scholasticism, making his own the very worst elements of realism, both philosophical and theological, seems to rest on fancy rather than on facts. We may likewise refuse to see in Wiclifism, with which Luther was acquainted only through the Constance Theses, any element of inspiration, and also shake our heads when some Protestants, at the other extreme, try to show that the Doctors of the Church, St. Augustine and St. Bernard, were really the parties responsible for Luther's turning his back on the doctrines of the Church.

On the other hand, the influence of mysticism, with which we have now to deal, deserves much more attention. It cannot be denied that a very considerable part in the development of his new ideas was played by mysticism; already at an early date the mystic spirit which Augustine's works owed to their writer's Platonic studies, had attracted Luther without, however, making him a Neo-Platonist.[1] During the time of his mental growth he was likewise warmly attached to German mysticism. Yet, here again, it is an exaggeration, as we can already see, to state as some non-Catholics do that Luther, "as the theologian of the Reformation," was merely "a disciple of Tauler and the Frankfort author of the German Theology," or that "it was only through meeting with the Frankfort theologian that he was changed from a despairing swimmer struggling in the billows of a gloomy sea into a great reformer."

[1] H. Böhmer, "Luther im Lichte der neueren Forschungen," (1910), p. 53. "What made such a deep impression on him? [in the works of Augustine]. First, if we may believe the notes in his own hand in the copy he chiefly used ('Werke,' Weim. ed., vol. ix.), more particularly Augustine's mystico-philosophical considerations on God, the world, the soul, the worthlessness of all earthly things, and felicity in God. These ideas, however, were hardly quite new to him. He had already met with them, for instance, in Bernard of Clairvaux and other mystics." That they should have "impressed him so forcibly," as Böhmer rightly remarks, was largely owing to the fact that his ear caught in them echoes of the ideas germinating in his own mind.

CHAPTER V

THE ROCKS OF FALSE MYSTICISM

1. Tauler and Luther

John Tauler, the mystic and Dominican preacher of Strasburg, whom Luther so favoured, was quite Catholic in his teaching; to attribute to him, as has been done, any Pantheistic ideas is to do him an injustice, and it is equally wrong to imagine that he forestalled Luther's notions regarding grace and justification. Yet his fanciful and suggestive mode of expression, his language which voiced, not the conceptual definiteness of Scholasticism, but the deep feelings of the speaker, often allows of his words being interpreted in a way quite foreign to his real meaning. It was just this depth of feeling and this obscurity which attracted Luther. As his letters show, he breathed more freely while perusing Tauler's writings, because they responded to his natural disposition and his moods, not the least point in their favour being the absence in them of those hard-and-dry philosophical and dialectical mannerisms which were hateful to him. Without even rightly understanding it, he at once applied the teaching of this master of mysticism to his own inward condition and his new, growing opinions; he clothed his own feelings and views in Tauler's beautiful and inspiring words. His beloved mother-tongue, so expertly handled in Tauler's sermons, was at the same time a new means of binding him still more firmly to the mystic. In Tauler the necessity of the complete surrender of the soul to the action of God, of indifference and self-abandonment, is strongly emphasised. To free oneself as far as possible of self; to renounce all confidence in oneself in so far as this implies self-love and the pride of the sinful creature; to accept with waiting, longing, suffering confidence God's almighty working, this, with Tauler as with all true mystics, is the fundamental condition

for a union through love with the most Perfect Being. Luther, in his false interpretation of Tauler, came to dream of a certain false passivity on man's part, which he then expanded into that complete passivity which accompanies the process of justification. He thought that Tauler repudiated the doing of good works in his own sense. He fancied that in him he had an ally in his fight against the so-called self-righteous and holy-by-works. He quite overlooked the contrary exhortations to the practice of good works and all observances of the Church which the great mystic had so much at heart.[1]

Tauler frequently speaks of the night of the soul, of the darkness in which the natural man must place himself on the way from death to life and through the cross to light; by this he means the self-humiliation which is pleasing to God, by which man fills himself with the sense of his own nothingness, and so prepares for the incoming of God into his innermost being. He often insists that the Creator, by means of the suffering and cruel inward desolation which He sends His elect, brings about that state of night, cross and death, to prove and refine the soul in order to prepare it for an intimate union with Himself. Such passages Luther referred to the states of fear and fright from which he so frequently suffered, possibly also to his want of joy in his vocation, and the state of unrest which, as he complains to his brother monk, George Leiffer, owing to his surrendering himself too much to his own excessive cleverness, pressed heavily upon him.[2] When, during the warfare he had to wage on behalf of his new doctrine, his inward unrest increased, and at times almost mastered him, he took refuge still more eagerly in the tenets of the mystic, striving to calm himself with the idea that his pangs of conscience and his mental anguish were merely a preparation for the strong, joyous faith which must spring up in his soul and

[1] Cp., e.g., Tauler's complaint against those who misuse the directions of the mystics in the sense of ethical passivity, i.e. of Quietism: "They blindly mislead their nature and become careless of all good works," etc. "They sink into a dangerous natural quietude . . . without the practice of virtue." "Man," on the contrary, "must recognise the commandments of God and the Church and resolve to keep the same." "Tauler's Sermons," ed. Hamberger, 1, p. 194 f. Cp. J. Zahn, "Einführung in die christl. Mystik," Paderborn, 1908, p. 313 ff.

[2] To George Leiffer, April 15, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 31.

those of his followers as a pledge of justification. His very doubts and difficulties became to him, with the help of his misunderstood mysticism, a sign that he was chosen for the highest things, and that God would lead him and all to peace through the new doctrine. It is in connection with his teaching concerning the night of the soul that he most frequently quotes Tauler at the commencement of his public struggle, whereas, before that, he had been wont to bring him into the field only against the so-called self-righteous, or against Scholasticism.[1]

It was known at that time that he had become a pupil of Tauler, whom he frequently quoted, but few of his adversaries seem to have recognised the above-mentioned psychological connection. Dungersheim of Leipzig on one occasion, in 1519, rightly holds up before him the teaching and example of Tauler, and tells him he might have learnt from him how useful it was to accept from others warnings and criticisms; he gloried in having learnt from Tauler many more spiritual doctrines than from any other man, but he really only understood one thing well, namely, how to kick against the pricks to his own hurt.[2]

Luther's first mention of Tauler is not contained in his letter to Lang of the late summer of 1516,[3] as was hitherto thought, but in the Commentary on Romans, which was already finished in the summer of 1516.

It follows from this circumstance that he was already acquainted with Tauler's sermons during the time that he was busy on this Epistle. He had come across them somewhat earlier, probably in the course of 1515, when he was nearing his inward crisis. In this passage of the Commentary[4] he declares that God works secretly in man and without his knowledge, and that what He does must be borne, i.e. must be accepted with humility and neglect of self. How we are thus to suffer what God sends, "Tauler," he says, "explains in the German language better than the others. Yes, yes, we do not know how to

[1] With regard to his ideas of the supposed animosity of mysticism for Scholasticism, W. Köhler says ("Luther und die Kirchengesch.," 1, 1, Erlangen, p. 285): "the opposition between mysticism and Scholasticism, which has become historic, was never so acute as it appeared to Luther's imagination. In principle, Scholasticism and mysticism stand on the same ground, one being the necessary complement of the other."

[2] From Dungersheim's "Dialogus adversus M. Lutherum"; Enders, "Briefwechsel," p. 180.

[3] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 55: "*iuxta Taulerum tuum.*"

[4] "Schol. Rom.," p. 205.

pray in the way we should. Therefore God's strength must come to the assistance of our misery. We, however, must acknowledge our despair and utter nakedness."

But without actually mentioning Tauler by name, he frequently in this Commentary, utilises ideas which he supports by his teaching. Thus, when in Romans v. 3 he describes in far-fetched terms the self-annihilation of the soul, its fears and pains, from which finally its firm hope in God emerges. The "*tribulatio patientiam operatur*" of the Apostle he takes there to mean mystical inward tribulation; one must desire to be as nothing, in order that the honour of the Eternal God as Creator may remain.[1] Only the self-righteous and the hypocrites shun the mystical death which lies in a renunciation of all self-merit; according to a mystical interpretation of a certain Bible passage the "strong man armed" (Luke xi. 21 f.) will destroy the "mountains of their works"; but the good, in their absolute destitution and tribulation, rejoice in God only, because, according to Paul, "the charity of God is poured forth" in the hearts of the sorely proved; they are drawn into the mysterious darkness of the Divine union and recognise therein not what they love, but only what they do not love; they find nothing but satiety in what they know and experience, only what they know not, that they desire.[2] Such language simply misinterprets some of Tauler's profound meditations.

As, in his Commentary on the Psalms, Luther does not yet refer either directly or indirectly to Tauler, although the matter frequently invited him to do so, this confirms the supposition that it was only after the termination of those lectures, or towards their conclusion in 1515, that he became acquainted with the Master's sermons—which alone come under consideration. Probably, as mentioned elsewhere, he owed his knowledge of them to Johann Lang.[3]

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 135, he says of the earthly minded: "*Nullus* [*est*] *eius Deus creator, quia non vult esse nihil, cuius ille sit creator. Nullius* [read *nullus*] *est potens, sapiens, bonus, quia non vult in infirmitate, stultitia, penalitate sustinere eum.*"

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 138, in the passage: "*Quia charitas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris*" (Rom. v. 5): "'*Charitas Dei*' *dicitur, quia per eam solum Deum diligimus, ubi nihil visibile, nihil experimentale nec intus nec foris est, in quod confidatur aut quod ametur aut timeatur, sed super omnia in invisibilem Deum et inexperimentalem, incomprehensibilem, sc. in medias tenebras interiores rapitur, nesciens quid amet, sciens, autem quid non amet, et omne cognitum et expertum fastidiens et id quod nondum cognoscit, tantum desiderans. . . . Hoc donum longissime abest ab iis, qui suas iustitias adhuc vident et diligunt et non visis tristantur.*" He thinks he must rise superior to such self-righteous, to whom his brother monks, who are zealous for good works (the Observantines ?), belonged.

[3] See above, p. 43. We shall deal later with his further relations with Lang, with whom he shared an inclination to mystic studies and leanings.

One of the books used by Luther in his youth and preserved in the Ratsschul-Library at Zwickau is a copy of Tauler's sermons in the 1508 Augsburg edition with Luther's annotations made about 1515.[1] The notes prove how strongly his active imagination was caught up into this new world of ideas, and how, with swelling sails, he set out for the port he thought lay beyond the mystic horizon.

Mysticism teaches the true wisdom, he there says, warmly praising this knowledge as "experimental, not doctrinal" ("*sapientia experimentalis et non doctrinalis*"). Dimly the error breaks in upon his mind, that man can have no wish, no will of his own with respect to God; true religion (*vera fides*) is the complete renunciation of the will, the most absolute passivity; only thus is the empty vessel of the heart filled by God, the cause of all; the work of salvation is a "*negotium absconditum*," entirely the work of God, and He commences it by the destruction of our self ("*quod nos et nostra destruat*"); He empties us not only of our good works and desires, but even of our knowledge, for "He can only work in us while we are ignorant and do not comprehend what He is doing." Any active striving after virtue on our part ("*operatio virtutum*") only hinders the birth of the word in our soul.[2]

His new ideal of virtue necessarily involves our not striving after any particular virtues; we are not to imitate this or that special virtue of some saint lest this prove to be the result of our own planning, and not God's direction, and thus be contrary to passivity.[3] Not only will he grant nothing to sexual desire, or allow it anywhere, but even the enjoyment of the five senses (he calls it simply *luxuria*) must be struggled against, and

[1] This is one of the seven old books discovered there in 1889–90; the glosses added by Luther to the same were edited by Buchwald in the Weim. ed., volume ix. For the glosses to Tauler, see *ibid.*, p. 95 ff.

[2] Weim. ed., 9, pp. 98, 102 f. The real action of God on the spirit is that which takes place through Him "*ignorantibus et non intelligentibus nobis id quod agit.*" He complains: "*Etsi sciamus quod Deus non agat in nobis, nisi prius nos et nostra destruat . . . non nudi stamus in mera fide*"; but the "*nuda fides*" is necessary because God acts contrary to our ways of thinking and does what we may fancy to be "*ex diabolo.*" Such exhortations to confide ourselves blindly to a higher direction may be right, but one naturally asks how is the fact of this guidance from on high to be guaranteed and distinguished from a mere leading astray. Luther in his public life simply assumed his mission to be divine because he felt it to be such (see vol. iii., xvi., 1 and 2), and because he persuaded himself that he was being led by inspiration from above "like a blind horse" to fight against Antichrist.

[3] Weim. ed., 9, p. 103: "*Nullius exempli passionem vel operationem oportet sibi præstituere, sed indifferentem et nudam voluntatem habere,*" etc.

the "sweets of the spirit" be kept at a distance, namely, "*devotiones*," "*affectiones*," "*consolationes et hominum bonorum societates.*"[1]

In his recommendation of passivity two tendencies unite, the negative influence of the school of Occam, viz. the opposition to human works, and the influence of certain dimly apprehended mystical thoughts.

While Luther twists Tauler's expressions to suit the errors which were germinating in his mind in opposition to Scholasticism, or, rather, to Occamism, he proceeds, according to his manuscript notes in Tauler's book, seriously to jeopardise free will without, however, as yet actually attacking it. He finds the origin of all evil in man's setting up against God his own will, and cherishing his own individual intentions and hopes. He thinks he is summing up the whole of Tauler's doctrine with the words "God does everything in us" ("*omnia in nobis operatur Deus*").[2] Where Tauler in one of his sermons, obviously speaking of other matters, says: "When God is in all things," Luther immediately follows up the author's words with: "*Hoc, quæso, nota*";[3] the exclusiveness of the Divine being and working appears to him of the utmost moment.

And yet it should be expressly pointed out that Tauler and the real Christian mystics knew nothing of that passivity and complete surrendering of self which floated before Luther's mind. On the contrary, they declare such ideas to be false. "The ideal of Christian mysticism is not an ideal of apathy but of energy,"[4] "a striving after an annihilation of individuality" was always a mark of mock mysticism. Another essential difference between true mysticism and that of Luther is to be found in the quality of the state of spiritual sadness and abandonment. Luther's descriptions of the state mirror the condition of a soul without hope or trust and merely filled with despair and dull resignation; this we shall see more clearly in his accounts of the pains of hell and of readiness for hell. With the recognised Catholic mystics this is not the case, and, in spite of all loss of consolation, there yet remains, according to them, "in the very depths of the soul, the heroic resolve of fidelity in silent prayer."[5] Confidence and love are never quenched though they are not sensibly felt, and the feeling of the separation of the soul from its God in this Gethsemane proceeds merely from a great love of God which does not think of any "readiness for hell." "That is love," Tauler

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 98 f.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 98: It is true he thinks he is explaining what precedes: "*Nota, quod divina pati magis quam agere oportet.*"

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 104. Cp. p. 103: "*Deus est intimior rebus ceteris quam ipse* [i.e. *ipsæ*] *sibi*," etc.

[4] See J. Zahn, "Einführung in die christl. Mystik," p. 320. Reference may be made to this excellent work for the historical proofs, even from Tauler, into which we are not able to enter; p. 291, on the "Erlöschen der Ichheit."

[5] Zahn, *ibid.*, pp. 331, 327.

says, where there is a burning in the midst of starvation, want and deprivations, and yet at the same time perfect calm.[1]

It is no wonder that in Luther's Commentary on Romans, written at about the same time as the notes, or shortly after, his pseudo-mysticism breaks out. In addition to the already quoted passages from the Commentary let us take the following, which is characteristic of his new conception of perfect love: With the cross we must put everything of self to death; should God give spiritual graces, we must not enjoy them, not rejoice over them; for they may bring us in place of death a mistaken life of self, so that we stop short at the creature and leave the Creator. Therefore away with all trust in works! Only the most perfect love, the embracing of God's will absolutely, without any personal advantage is of any worth, only such love as would, if it could, strip itself even of its own being.[2]

Frequently in this period of strange spiritual transition Luther's manner of speaking of the dissolving of the soul in God, and the penetrating of all things by the Divine, borders on Pantheism, or on false Neo-Platonism. This, however, is merely owing to his faulty mode of expression. He does not appear to have been either disposed or tempted to leave the path of Christianity for actual Pantheism or Neo-Platonism, although the previous example of Master Eckhart and of others shows us, that mysticism has not infrequently allured even great and talented minds on to these rocks. That he should, as already shown, have welcomed without any sign of scruple the actual destruction of all free will for good must, in part, be explained by his lack of a thorough theological and philosophical training. How different might have been his development, given his mental character, had he, instead of devoting his attention in his unripe years to the teachings of mysticism, steeped himself, for instance, in the "*Summa Theologica*" of Thomas of Aquin,

[1] "Sermons," ed. Hamberger, 2, p. 131; in the sermon on Luke xv. 8 ff. Cp. Zahn, p. 343 ff. "Ueber die Prüfungen im mystischen Leben."

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 135 *seq.*, p. 138: "*Charitas Dei, quæ est purissima affectio in Deum, quæ sola facit rectos corde, sola aufert iniquitatem, sola exstinguit fruitionem propriæ iustitiæ. Quia non nisi solum et purum Deum diligit, non dona ipsa Dei, sicut hipocritæ iustitiarii.*" P. 139, again against the "*hipocritarum charitas, qui sibi ipsis fingunt et simulant se habere charitatem. . . . Diligere Deum propter dona et propter comodum est vilissima dilectione, i.e. concupiscentia cum diligere.*" God is to be loved "*propter voluntatem Dei absolute,*" otherwise it is not the love of the children of God, but the love of slaves. He overlooks the fact that it is possible to recommend the higher without altogether repudiating the lower.

that brightest and greatest mind of the Middle Ages! After making himself thoroughly at home in such a theology he would then have been qualified to summon to his assistance the better sort of mysticism, in which he would have found much agreeing with his stamp of mind and which would have allowed him to rise to a still higher enjoyment of the true and good. If then he was not content to stop short at Tauler and the "German Theology," there was the Dominican Henry Suso also at his service, the godly author of writings such as "The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom," which has been called the "finest fruit of German mysticism" (Denifle). He shows in how inspiring a union pious immersion in God can be combined with theological clearness of thought. Many others who flourished after the time of Suso, in Germany and elsewhere, and who distinguished themselves as practical and at the same time theoretical mystics by the depth of their feeling and their theological culture would have served as his examples. Such were Johann Ruysbroek, of Groenendael near Brussels, Gerard Groot of Deventer, the founder of the Brothers of the Common Life, Henry of Louvain, Ludolf the Carthusian, Gerson of Paris—with his excellent Introduction to Mysticism, on the lines of the so-called Areopagite—Thomas à Kempis, the pious guide, and, among enlightened women, Lidwina of Schiedam in Holland, Catherine of Bologna and Catherine of Genoa. The names mentioned, so far as they belong to the domain of German mysticism, point to a fertile religious and literary field in Luther's own country, as attractive by profundity of thought and beauty of representation as by depth of feeling and heartiness of expression. It was a cruel misunderstanding—which, however, is now breaking down more and more, even in the case of Protestant writers—to represent the ideas of German mysticism as precursors of Luther's later doctrine.

This vein of true mysticism remained sealed to Luther. By attempting to create a theology of his own with the fantastic notions which he read into Tauler, he fell into the mistake against which Thomas of Aquin had already sounded a warning note in his "*Summa Theologica.*" Without a safe guiding star many minds are led astray by the attraction of the extraordinary, by the delusions of an excited fancy or the influence of disordered inclinations,

and consider that to be the work of Divine grace which is merely deception, as experience shows.[1]

As an expression of the spiritual turmoil going on in Luther, we may quote a passage from a sermon of January, 1517. Speaking of the gifts of the three kings he says: "the pure and choice myrrh is the abnegation with which we must be ready to return to absolute nothingness, to the state before creation; every longing for God is there relinquished (!), and likewise the desire for things outside of God; one thing only is desired: to be led according to His good pleasure back to the starting-point, i.e. to nothingness. Ah, yes, just as before God called us into existence we were nothing, desired nothing, and existed only in the mind of God, so we must return to that point, to know nothing, to desire nothing, to be nothing. That is a short way, the way of the cross, by which we may most speedily arrive at life."[2] Whether a sermon was the right place for such, at best purely incomprehensible, an outburst, is doubtful. Luther, the idealist, was then disposed to pay but little attention to such practical considerations. In the eyes of many of his pupils and friends, however, mystical discourses of this sort may have lent him the appearance of a pious, spiritually minded man.

With regard to the "way of the cross" and the "theology of the cross," which he began to teach as soon as he had lost himself in the maze of mysticism, he explains himself more clearly in the Disputations which he organised at Wittenberg, and which will be dealt with below.[3]

[1] 2–2, q. 188, a. 5.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 123 f., quoted by Hunzinger, "Luther und die deutsche Mystik" ["Neue kirchl. Zeitschr.," 19 (1908), Heft 11, pp. 972–88], p. 984, who remarks: the passage shows "how great the danger was at that time of Luther becoming lost in these speculations"; this is the "most extreme mystical utterance to be found in his writings." When he says: "What is here described as a *via crucis* is genuinely Neo-Platonic," all will not agree with him. Hunzinger, p. 975, also considers it a proof of Neo-Platonism when, in his Commentary on the Psalms, Luther follows St. Augustine and urges man "*avertere se a visibilibus et convertere se ad invisibilia et intelligibilia.*" One is more inclined to agree with his concluding sentence: "No one will wish to assert, after taking note of this proposition, that Luther in his mystical period never left the path of the ethical."

[3] See below, viii. 2.

2. Effect of Mysticism on Luther

The study of mysticism was not altogether disadvantageous to Luther, for it proved of use to him in various ways.

First, as regards his grasp of spiritual subjects and their expression in words, Tauler's simple and heartfelt manner taught him how to clothe his thoughts in popular and attractive dress. The proof of this is to be found in his writings for the people and in several of his more carefully prepared sermons, particularly in the works and sermons of the first period when the mystical influence was still predominant. Also with regard to the common body of Christian belief, so far as he still held fast to the same, several excellent elements of Catholic mysticism stood him in good stead, notwithstanding his inward alienation. The intimate attachment of the mystics to Christ and their longing expectation of salvation through the Lord alone, sentiments which made an immense impression on his soul, notwithstanding the fact that he understood them in a one-sided and mistaken fashion, probably had their share in preserving in him to the very end his faith in the Divinity of Christ and in the salvation He wrought. They also led him to esteem the whole Bible as the Word of God, and to hold fast to various other mysteries which some of the Reformers opposed, for instance, the mysterious presence of Christ in the Sacrament, even though they did not prevent him from modifying these doctrines according to his whim. While Luther retained many of the views rooted in the faith and sentiment of earlier ages, the Rationalism of Zwingli was much more ready to throw overboard what did not appear to be sanctioned by reason; this came out especially in the controversy on the Lord's Supper. The reason of this was that Zwingli had been trained in the school of a narrow and critical Humanism; of mysticism in any shape or form he knew nothing at all.

Among the advantages which Luther derived from mysticism we cannot, however, reckon, as some have done, his later success against the fanatics; this success was not a result of his having overcome their false mysticism by the true one. By that time he had almost completely given up his mysticism, whether true or false. He certainly met

the attacks of the fanatics and Anabaptists by appealing to his own mystical experiences, but that was really a mere tactical, though none the less effective, manœuvre on his part, which, with his ready tongue and pen, he was able to put to excellent account. "Who spoke of spirits?" he says; "I also know the spirit and have had experience of the spirit; I am able, yea, am called, to reveal their delusions." And in the eyes of many he may certainly have been considered, on account of the "mystical" terrors he had suffered, and to which he frequently referred in public, to be specially fitted to unmask the false spiritualism of his opponents. As a matter of fact, his fears and his mysticism had nothing to do with the real discerning of spirits; they never brought him light, but only darkness. The truth is that, at the time of his contest with the fanatics, he had become more sober, had a clear, practical eye for the mischief of the movement, and regarded it as the highest duty of self-preservation to stamp out the flame of revolt against his patrons and his own teaching. We shall see, however, that the fanatics were, in a certain sense, the children of Luther's own spirit.

The real good which Luther may have derived from the study of mysticism was far more than counterbalanced by the regrettable results of his notions concerning the "pure myrrh" of passivity, and the desire for nothingness, which at one and the same time involved him in a real labyrinth, and raised his estimation of his own mission to an enormous and dangerous height. He came to fancy himself far superior not only to the Occamists, but to the whole of the secular and regular clergy, the "swarm of religious and priests," even to all the theologians, and particularly to the Scholastics, those "sow theologians," who knew nothing of what he was conversant with.

His mysticism had already paved the way for his later belief with regard to his own Divine call to establish the new teaching; it was supported by his views of God's guidance of the unconscious soul; what he would formerly have regarded as a mistaken road and due to diabolical inspiration was now labelled a godly act.

True and real mysticism could not take root in him because, to start with, the necessary predisposition, con-

cerning which the other mystics and Tauler are agreed, was wanting, viz. above all humility, calmness and that holy indifference, which allows itself to be led by God along the path of the rules of its calling without any ulterior, private aims; peaceableness, composure of mind and zeal in prayer were not his. What mysticism left behind in Luther was scarcely more than the fragrance of its words, without any real fruit. What took root and grew in him was rather the hard wood from which lances are made, ready for every combat that may arise. His mysticism itself gives the impression of being part of the battle which his antagonism to the Occamists led him to give to Scholasticism. Those who contradicted his new ideas—even his brother monks, like the Erfurt philosophers and theologians—appeared to him to be opposed on account of their Scholasticism. The most effective way of escaping or overcoming them seemed to him the replacing of the older theology by another, in which, together with Holy Scripture and St. Augustine, mysticism should occupy a chief place.

By this, however, we do not mean that the mysticism of Luther was merely a fighting weapon. From his letters we may gather that he lived in the belief that his new road would conduct him to a joyous nearness to God.

The letter is dated December 14, 1516, in which he exhorts his friend Spalatin, at the Court of the Elector, to taste in Tauler "the pure, thorough theology, which so closely resembles the old, and to see how bitter everything is that is ourselves," in order to "discover how sweet the Lord is."[1] He is already so mystically inclined that he will not even advise his friend in answer to a query, which little religious books he should translate into German for the use of the people; this advice lay in the counsel of God, as what was most wholesome for man was generally not appreciated; hardly was there one who sought for Christ; the world was full of wolves (these thoughts certainly seem to have remained with him in his public career); we must mistrust even our best intentions and be guided only by Christ in prayer; but the "swarm of religious and priests always follow their own good and pious notions and are thereby miserably deceived."

His letter to George Spenlein, which is saturated with an extravagant mysticism of grace, also belongs to the same year, 1516.[2]

On December 4, 1516 (see above, p. 87), Luther finished seeing through the press the "Theologia Deutsch," which he

[1] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 74 f.
[2] April 8, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 28. See above, p. 88.

brought out, first in an incomplete edition, because he was under the impression that it was by Tauler. It is an echo of Tauler's authentic works, somewhat distorted, however, by Luther's Preface, at the end of which he declares that a thorough teaching of the Holy Scripture "must make fools," intending thereby to contrast the insignificance of natural knowledge with Divine revelation. The booklet teaches mysticism from the Church's standpoint, though its language is not well chosen. There is, however, no real need to interpret certain obscure passages in a pantheistic sense, as has been done. The booklet cannot therefore be taken as a proof that Luther at that time was pantheistically inclined, or that he possessed so little theological and philosophical knowledge as not to be able to distinguish between Pantheism and the teaching of the Church. Nor is there the slightest trace of specifically Lutheran doctrine in the "Theologia Deutsch."[1]

In a sermon of February 15, 1517, based on Tauler, Luther busies himself with those priests, laymen, and in particular religious, who, so he says, wish to be thought especially pious, but who are hypocrites because, even in spiritual things, they do not overcome their self-love because they attempt, for the love of God, to accomplish much and to do great things; almost all Tauler's sermons, he remarks, show how clearly he saw through these false self-righteous, and how energetically he opposed them.[2] As a matter of fact, Tauler, in the remarks referred to, has in his mind those who deserve, for other reasons, to be blamed on account of their perverse and proud mind, while Luther utilises such utterances in support of his own notorious dislike for good works and for zealous individual effort.[3]

[1] Recently edited (1908) by H. Mandel according to Luther's edition with additions from MSS.; see "Theol. Literaturztg.," p. 493 (1909). Mandel says in the preface: "It is obviously not correct to represent Luther's well-known experiences in the monastery [which?] as directly connected with his fundamental ideas of reform. Rather it is evident, and acknowledged by Luther himself, that he learnt his root ideas in the school of Tauler and the 'Theologia Deutsch.'" It is true that his misapprehension of the same strengthened his mistaken notions. The very first chapter in the booklet disproves the assertion frequently made that it is decidedly Pantheistic in tone; there a definite distinction is made between God and the creature as the "perfect" and the "divided" essence: "of all the divided none is perfect. Hence the perfect is no part of the divided." In the light of this the obscure sentence which occurs in the "Theologia Deutsch," that God, the Perfect, is the essence of all things, without which and outside of which there is no real being, must not be understood in the Pantheistic sense. The book, in fact, contains no sentence which cannot be understood in an orthodox fashion when taken in conjunction with others.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 137.

[3] Cp. W. Köhler, "Luther und die Kirchengesch.," 1, 1, p. 244, who quotes Tauler in the above sense from his sermons in Hamberger's edition (Frankfurt a/M., 1864), volume i., p. 261 ff.; volume ii., pp. 408, 410, 428. Köhler remarks (p. 239) that "however much

In his defence of his Wittenberg Indulgence Theses against Eck's "Obelisci" (1518), we also find a characteristic misrepresentation of Tauler. Tauler, speaking of the possible torments resulting from the deprivation of religious consolation which may be experienced on earth, instances the vision of a poor soul who, by humble resignation to God's Will, was delivered from its trouble. Luther takes the story as referring to a soul in Purgatory, and sees therein not merely a proof that souls are resigned in the place of purgation, but that they actually rejoice in the separation from salvation which God has imposed upon them; finally, he uses the story in support of his twenty-ninth pseudo-mystical thesis, in which he says that, on account of the piety of those who have died in the peace of God, it is uncertain whether all souls in Purgatory even wish to be delivered from their torments.[1] His mystical ideas concerning abandonment to God's good pleasure had warped his understanding.

In the above passage, and again later, he instances Paul and Moses as men who had desired to become a curse of God. If they expressed such a wish during life, he declares, a similar desire on the part of the dead is comprehensible. The common and better interpretation of the Bible passages in question regarding Moses and Paul differs very much from that of Luther.

Luther embraced the idea, which permeates Tauler's works, of the painful annihilation of self-will and of all man's sensual inclinations, not in order to mortify his own self-will and sensuality by obedience to the rules of his Order and humble submission to the practices of the Church, but the better to make his delusive disregard for the zealous performance of good works appear high and perfect to his own mind and in that of others.

One should be ready, so he asserts in the defence of his theses against Prierias, to renounce all hope in any merit or reward to such an extent that "if you were to see heaven open before you, you would nevertheless, as the learned Dr. Tauler, one of your own Order [Prierias was also a Dominican], says, not enter unless you had first consulted God's Will as regards your entering, so that even in glory you may not be seeking your own will."[2] In Tauler there is, it is true, something of the sort,[3] though it does not authorise

Tauler had in common with Luther . . . the latter overlooked the differences"; on p. 244: "his severity to self-righteousness is a point which Luther learnt from Tauler."

[1] In his "Asterisci," Weim. ed., 1, p. 298, agreeing with the Resolutiones, *ibid.*, p. 586. Cp. Köhler, pp. 248–50.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 674; Köhler, p. 252.

[3] Volume ii., p. 133.

Luther to assume the standpoint he does in his theory of resignation. Luther in his Commentary on Romans, as already stated, goes so far as to preach resignation to eternal damnation, and even to demand of us a desire to be damned should it please God to decree it for us (see below, vi. 9). All this for the ostensible purpose of excluding the slightest appearance of self-love. "But how," a modern author asks, writing with a knowledge of the better Christian mysticism, "can there be less merit in striving after the final consummation in the next life which is offered and recommended to us by the Divine favour, and from which final salvation is inseparable? How then can the ideal state of the mystic consist in indifference to his perfection and salvation, to heaven or hell?"[1] "Indifference with regard to the attainment of the highest, uncreated, eternal, endless Good can never be postulated."[2] But Luther thinks he can justify this and other errors with the help of Tauler and his own mysticism.

But he did not, and could not, use Tauler as a weapon against the Schoolmen. All he could do was to magnify the loss which these had suffered through not being acquainted with such a theology as Tauler's, "the truest theology." Tauler, as a matter of fact, was not opposed to Scholasticism, indeed, the pith of his exhortations rests upon well-grounded scholastic principles.

By the time his second and complete edition of the "Theologia Deutsch" appeared, the printing of which was finished on June 4, 1518, Luther knew with certainty that this booklet was not by Tauler. Nevertheless, in the Preface he heaps exaggerated praise upon it, gives it a

[1] J. Zahn, "Einführung in die christl. Mystik," p. 302.

[2] J. Zahn, *ibid.*, p. 303. Zahn expresses himself very aptly in regard to the unfavourable moral effects of the contrary theory; the incentive which Christ expressly recommends when He says we are to rejoice in the glorious reward which awaits us in the next world (Matt. v. 12) has a very different influence. Against Fénelon's incorrect views of pure love without any admixture of interest for eternal salvation, he has the following: "The greatest fault in Fénelon's system lies in the coupling together of the real striving after perfection and the attainment of salvation with an unworthy egotistical working for a reward" (p. 307). The theories of Mme. Guyon, whom Fénelon defends, are simply appalling: "O Will of my God, Thou wouldst be my Paradise in Hell." According to her, the sacrifice of salvation is the culmination of the interior life (*ibid.*, p. 292). Cp. the propositions from the Quietist mysticism of Molinos, condemned by Innocent XI on November 20, 1687.

place beside the Bible and St. Augustine, and declares that his own teaching, on account of which Wittenberg is being assailed, possesses in it a real bulwark: "Only now" has he discovered that, before his time, "other people" thought just the same as he. Here then we see the alliance which he has entered into with mysticism, now placed completely at the service of his rediscovered Evangel; the sympathy which had attracted him to the German mystics during the last few years here reveals its true character and is led to its overdue triumph. In a certain sense mysticism was always to remain harnessed to his chariot.

On the other hand, Luther very soon gave up pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the mystic whose teaching had spread from the East over the whole of the West. At first, following public opinion, he had esteemed him very highly, the more so since he had taken him for a disciple of the Apostles; but, subsequently to the Disputation at Leipzig, where the Areopagite was urged against him, he shows himself very much opposed to him. According to Luther, he does not allow Christ to come to His rights, he grants too much to philosophy and is, of course, all wrong in his teaching concerning the hierarchy of the Church.[1] Luther, however, always remained true to St. Bernard, with whom he had become acquainted, together with Gerson, in his spiritual reading at the monastery. From St. Bernard, as likewise from Tauler, he borrowed many mystic ideas, yet not without at the same time forcibly misinterpreting them and ascribing to the former, ideas which are altogether foreign to his mind.[2] Gerson's theologico-mystical introduction, which Luther cites in his glosses on Tauler, did not experience any better treatment at his hands,[3] while Bona-

[1] An exposition of Luther's directed against the Areopagite ("Werke," Weim. ed., 5, p. 163) is accompanied with the strange information that one becomes a theologian "*moriendo et damnando, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando.*"

[2] Köhler, p. 332. "There is an immense difference" when Luther speaks of trust in God or of the sufferings of Christ and when Bernard does the same. "Luther did not notice anything of this difference, though it was worth while examining . . . he identified with him his own resuscitation of the gospel."

[3] Cp. "Werke," Erl. ed., 62, p. 121 f. (Table-Talk); Köhler, p. 362 f.: "Those Romanists (Emser, Eck, etc.) knew better how to appreciate Gerson than Luther did, in whom the insight into Gerson's 'Catholicism' was sadly wanting." "He ever remained a stranger to the true inwardness of Gerson."

venture, the mystic whom he once prized, came under suspicion on account of his theological teaching, even before the Areopagite.[1]

On the other hand, he retained his esteem for Tauler till the end.

Some very remarkable references which Luther makes to Tauler's teaching are in connection with the troubles of conscience which dogged the steps of the Wittenberg Doctor from his first public appearance. These will be mentioned later, together with the means of allaying such torments of soul, which he gives in his "*Operationes in Psalmos*" (1519–21), borrowing them from misunderstood passages of Tauler.

We conclude with another passage from the "*Operationes*" in which, following Tauler, he gives expression to that favourite idea of his, which like a star of ill-omen presided at the rise of his new theology. Psalm xi., according to him, is intended to demonstrate the "righteousness by faith" against "the supporters of holiness by works and the deceptive appearance of human righteousness." This is a forced interpretation going far beyond his own former exposition of the Psalm in question. "To-day," he says—with an eye on the so-called holy-by-works, or *iustitiarii*—"there are many such seducers, as Johann Tauler also frequently warns us."[2] Of course, here again, what he has in mind are the well-known admonitions of Tauler, to trust in God more than in our own acts of virtue, though he takes them quite wrongly as implying the worthlessness of works for salvation. A Protestant authority here meets us at least half-way: "Tauler certainly did not hold in so accentuated a fashion as Luther the antithesis between grace and works, for he allows that 'good works' bring a man forward on the way of salvation."[3]

Luther, since beginning his over-zealous and excited perusal of Tauler's writings, presents to the calm observer the appearance of a man caught up in a dangerous whirl of overstrain. Even in the first months this whirl of a mystic world brought up from the depth of his soul all the

[1] Köhler, p. 335 f., where examples are given of Luther's "subjective interpretation" of St. Bonaventure.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 5, p. 353.

[3] Köhler, p. 261. Köhler says that Tauler "laid great stress on the Divine initiative"; but so did the Scholastics and the Fathers.

accumulated sediment of anti-theological feeling and disgust with the state of the Church. The enthusiasm with which Luther speaks of the "Theologia Deutsch" and Tauler, shows, as a Protestant theologian has it, "that the mysticism of the late Middle Ages had intoxicated him." "It is clear that we have here a turning-point in Luther's theology."[1]

Of mighty importance for the future was his unfortunate choice, perhaps due to his state of mind, just in that period of storm and stress, to deliver lectures at the University on the Epistle to the Romans. Through his Commentary on this Epistle he set a seal upon his new views directed against the Church's doctrine concerning grace, works and justification.

[1] Hunzinger, "Neue kirchl. Zeitschr.," *ibid.*, p. 985 f. "We may say that German mysticism achieved what it did in Luther in union with his study of the Epistle to the Romans." "Thus the acute change from Indeterminism to religious Determinism took place in Luther under the direct influence of German mysticism. In the '*De servo arbitrio*' it attained its extremest limit. This is not explained [more correctly, *entirely* explained], as some have thought, by Occamism, but by German mysticism." P. 987: After his period of mysticism Luther took leave altogether of the semi-Pelagianism and Indeterminism of Scholasticism. On p. 988 Luther's standpoint is thus stated: "Any concurrence between free will and its faculties and grace, or any kind of preparation for grace, is altogether done away with. . . . God's grace alone works for salvation, and predestination is the only cause of salvation in those who are justified."

CHAPTER VI

THE CHANGE OF 1515 IN THE LIGHT OF THE COMMENTARY ON ROMANS (1515–16)

1. The New Publications

LUTHER'S lectures on the Epistle to the Romans which, as mentioned above (p. 93), he delivered at Wittenberg from April, 1515, to September or October, 1516, existed till recently (1904–8) only in MS. form. To Denifle belongs the merit of having first drawn public attention to this important source of information, which he exploited, and from the text of which he furnished long extracts according to the Vatican Codex palatinus lat. 1826.[1] The MS. referred to, containing the scholia, is a copy by Aurifaber of the lectures which Luther himself wrote out in full, and once belonged to the library of Ulrich Fugger, whence it came to the Palatina at Heidelberg, and, ultimately, on the transference of the Palatina to Rome, found its way to the Vatican Library. It was first made use of by Dr. Vopel, and then, in 1899, thoroughly studied by Professor Joh. Ficker.[2] While the work was in process of publication the original by Luther's own hand was discovered in 1903 in the Codex lat. theol. 21,4° of the State Library in Berlin, or rather rediscovered, for it had already been referred to in 1752 in an account of the library.[3] According to this MS., which also contains the glosses,[4] the Commentary, after having been collated with the Roman MS., which is frequently inaccurate, was edited with a detailed introduc-

[1] Denifle, "Luther und Luthertum," 1^1, more particularly from p. 413; Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, more particularly from p. 447; Denifle, 1^2, "Quellenbelege," p. 309 ff.

[2] See Joh. Ficker, "Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief," Leipzig, 1908, p. xxv. ff., xxx.

[3] Cp. Grauert, "P. Heinrich Denifle," 1906, p. 53 ff. Grauert referred to J. K. Oetrich, "Entwurf einer Gesch. der Bibliothek zu Berlin" (1752, p. 63).

[4] On the glosses and scholia generally, see above, p. 63.

tion at Leipzig in 1908 by Joh. Ficker, Professor at Strasburg University; it forms the first volume of a collection entitled "Anfänge reformatorischer Bibelauslegung."

Denifle's preliminary excerpts were so ample and exact that, as a comparison with what has since been published proves, they afforded a trustworthy insight into a certain number of Luther's doctrinal views of decisive value in forming an opinion on the general course of his development.[1] But it is only now, with the whole work before us, scholia and glosses complete, that it is possible to give a fair and well-founded account of the ideas which were coming to the front in Luther. The connection between different points of his teaching appears in a clearer light, and various opinions are disclosed which were fresh in Luther's mind, and upon which Denifle had not touched, but which are of great importance in the history of his growth. Among such matters thus brought to light were Luther's gloomy views on God and predestination, with which we shall deal in our next section.

The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans ranks first among all his letters for the depth of thought and wealth of revelation which it contains. It treats of the most exalted questions of human thought, and handles the most difficult problems of Christian faith and hope. Its subject-matter is the eternal election of the Gentile and Jewish world to salvation in Christ; the guidance of the heathen by the law of nature, and of the Jews by the Mosaic law; the powers of man when left to himself, and of man supernaturally raised; the universality and potency of the saving grace of Christ, and the manner of its appropriation in justification by faith; finally the life, death and resurrection in which the Christian, through faith, unites himself with Christ.[2]

We may doubt whether the young Doctor of Wittenberg was qualified to grapple with so great a task as the explanation of this charter of faith, especially bearing in mind his comparatively insignificant knowledge of the Fathers of the Church and the theological literature of the past, his impetuosity in dealing with recondite questions, and his excitable fancy which always hurried in advance of his judgment. At any rate, he himself thought his powers

[1] See above, p. 93 f. [2] See below, chapter viii. 1.

sufficient for a work on which the most enlightened minds of the Church had tested their abilities. He immediately followed up this Commentary with other lectures on certain epistles of St. Paul, wherein the Apostle discloses the depths of his knowledge.

On perusing the lengthy pages of the Commentary on Romans we are amazed at the eloquence of the young author, at his dexterity in description and his skill in the apt use of biblical quotations; but his manner of working contrasts very unfavourably with that of the older Commentators on the Epistle, such as Thomas of Aquin with his brevity and definiteness and, particularly, his assurance in theological matters. Luther's mode of treating the subject is, apart from other considerations, usually too rhetorical and not seldom quite tedious in its amplitude.

The work, with its freedom both in its language and its treatment of the subject, reveals many interesting traits which go to make up a picture of Luther's inward self.

He starts with the assumption that the whole of the Epistle was intended by its author to "uproot from the heart the feeling of self-righteousness and any satisfaction in the same," and—to use his own odd expression—"to implant, establish and magnify sin therein (*'plantare, ac constituere et magnificare peccatum'*)."[1] "Although there may be no sin in the heart or any suspicion of its existence," he declares, we ought and must feel ourselves to be full of sin, in contradistinction to the grace of Christ from Whom alone we receive what is pleasing to God.

In his passionate opposition to the real or imaginary self-righteous he allows himself, in these lectures, to be drawn into an ever deeper distrust of man's ability to do anything that is good. The nightmare of self-righteousness never leaves him for a moment. His attack would have been justifiable if he had merely been fighting against sinful self-righteousness which is really selfishness, or against the delusion that natural morality will suffice before God. Nor does it appear who is defending such erroneous ideas against him, or which school upheld the thesis Luther is always opposing, viz. that there is a saving righteousness which arises, is preserved, and works without the preventing

[1] Cod. Vat. palat. 1826, fol. 77; Denifle, 1^2, "Quellenbelege," p. 313 f.; Ficker, "Rom. Schol.," p. 2 f.

and accompanying grace of God. It is, however, clear that there was in his own soul a dislike for works; so strong in fact is his feeling in this regard that he simply calls all works "works of the law," and cannot be too forcible in demonstrating the antagonism of the Apostle to their supposed over-estimation. Probably one reason for his selection of this Epistle for interpretation was that it appeared to him to agree even better than other biblical works with his own ideas against "self-righteousness." We must now consider in detail some of the leading ideas of the Commentary on Romans.

2. Gloomy Views regarding God and Predestination

The tendency to a dismal conception of God plays, in combination with his ideas on predestination, an incisive part in Luther's Commentary on Romans, which, so far, has received too little attention. The tendency is noticeable throughout his early mental history. He was never able to overcome his former temptations to sadness and despair on account of the possibility of his irrevocable predestination to hell, sufficiently to attain to the joy of the children of God and to the trustful recognition of God's general and certain will for our salvation. The advice which Staupitz, among others, gave him was assuredly correct, viz. to take refuge in the wounds of Christ, and Luther probably tried to follow it. But we do not learn that he paid diligent heed to the further admonitions of the ancient ascetics, to exert oneself in the practice of good works, as though one's predestination depended entirely on the works one performs with the grace of God. On the contrary, of set purpose, he avoided any effort on his own part and preferred the misleading mystical views of Quietism.

The melancholy idea of predestination again peeps out unabashed in the passage in his Commentary on the Psalms, where he says, that Christ "drank the cup of pain for His elect, but not for all."[1]

If he set out to explain the Epistle to the Romans with a gloomy conception of God, in which we recognise the old temptations regarding predestination, owing to his misapprehension of certain passages of the Epistle concerning

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 227.

God's liberty and inscrutability in the bestowal of grace, his ideas, as he advances, become progressively more stern and dismal. The editor of the Commentary remarks, not without reason, on the forcible way in which Luther, "even in chapter i., emphasises the sovereignty of the Will of God."[1] It is true of many, Luther says there, that God gives them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness (cp. Rom. i. 24), nor is this merely a permission, but an appointment and command ("*non tantum permissio, sed commissio et iussio*").[2] In such a case God commands the devil or the flesh to tempt a man and conquer him. It is true that when God chooses to act graciously He prevents the evil; but He also wills to be severe and to punish, and "then He makes the wicked to sin more abundantly ('*facit abundantius peccare*')"; then "He forsakes a man so that he may not be able to resist the devil, who carries out the order and the Will of God in bringing about his fall."

The youthful University Professor believes that he is here teaching a "more profound theology." No one was to come to him, he says, with the shallow and hackneyed assertion that, on the above hypothesis, man's free will was destroyed; only narrow minds ("*rudiores*") take exception at this "*profundior theologia.*"[3] The teaching of this new theology was the following:

"This man may do what he pleases, it is God's will that he should be overcome by sin." "It is true that God does not desire the sin, although He wills that it shall take place ('*non sequitur quod Deus peccatum velit, licet ipsum velit fieri*'); for He only wills that it shall happen, in order to manifest in man the greatness of His anger and His severity by punishing in him the sin which He hates." "It is therefore on account of the punishment that God wills that the sin shall be committed. . . . God alone may will such a thing" ("*Hoc autem soli Deo licitum est velle*"),[4] and he repeats fearlessly: "in order that all misery and shame may be heaped upon the man, God wills he should commit this sin."[5] He fancies he is communicating to his pupils "the highest secrets of theology," meant only for the perfect, when he assures them that both statements are right: God wills to oblige me and all men [to do what is good] and yet He does not

[1] Ficker, p. l.
[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 21 ff. Denifle had only stated generally that Luther taught absolute predestination, without quoting the passages in the Commentary. Cp. Fr. Loofs, "Dogmengesch.,"[4] p. 709, n. 8.
[3] "Schol. Rom.," p. 22 f. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 22 f.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

give His grace to all, but only to whom He will, reserving to Himself the choice. Some it does not please Him to justify because He manifests so much the more through them His honour in the elect; in the same way He also wills sin, though only indirectly, viz. "that He may be glorified in the elect." Hence we must not make it a mere matter of permission, for "how would God permit it unless it were His will?" "Senseless chatter," thus he describes the unanimous contrary teaching of theologians, "such is the objection they raise that man would thus be damned without any fault on his part, because he could not fulfil the law and was expected to do what was impossible."—We can only ask how his own method is to be described when he contents himself with this solution: "If that objection had any weight it would follow that it was not necessary to preach, to pray, to exhort, and Christ's death would also not be necessary. Yet by means of all this God has chosen to save His elect."[1]

Luther, as this somewhat lengthy passage shows, had, at any rate at that time, no bright, kindly idea of God's Nature, Goodness and inexhaustible Mercy, which wills to make every creature here on earth happy and to save them in eternity; his mind was imprisoned within the narrow limits to which he had before this accustomed himself; a false conception of God's essence—perhaps a remainder of his Occamist training—was already poisoning the very vitals of his theology.

His melancholy conception of God comes to light not only in the various passages where he speaks of predestination, but also in the dark pictures, which, in his morbid frame of mind, he paints of the wickedness and sin of man pitting his unquenchable concupiscence against God, the All Holy.[2] In order to adore this stern and cruel God in

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 24.

[2] With regard to the fact of Luther's tendency to a fear and terror of God, O. Scheel says ("Die Entwicklung Luthers, Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgesch.," No. 100, Leipzig, 1910, pp. 61–230, p. 80): "We possess statements from Luther's own pen during his life in the monastery which show that the thought of death and Divine Judgment moved him deeply. The words, that the countenance of the Lord is upon us, are [to him] terrible. . . . We see one fear succeeding the other in the face of sudden death . . . the thought of God the Judge inspires him with horror. . . . It is possible that the manner in which these feelings express themselves was connected with morbid dispositions, that the attacks of fear which suddenly, without apparent cause, fell upon him, were due to an unhealthy body. That the assaults reacted on his bodily state is probable. The root of the fear, however, lies in the lively conviction of the righteous Judgment of God." W. Braun ("Die Bedeutung der Concupiscenz in Luthers Leben und Lehre," p. 295) thinks that "Luther's assaults in the monastery were a mystical exercise. He experienced what

his own way he had already built up on his false mysticism a practical theory of resignation and self-surrender to whatever might be the Divine Will, even should it destine him to damnation. In the first pages of the Commentary on Romans his idea of God enables him to proclaim loudly and boldly, and with full knowledge of what he is doing, his opposition to the religious practice of his many zealous contemporaries, whether clerics or laymen.

Many have, according to him, an idea of God different from his: "Oh, how many there are to-day who do not worship God as He is, but as they imagine Him to be. Look at their singularities and their superstitious rites, full of delusions. They give up what they ought to practise, they choose out the works by which they will honour Him, they fancy that God is such that He looks down upon them and their works." "There is spread abroad to-day a sort of idolatry by which God is not served as He is. The love of their own ideas and their own righteousness entirely blinds mankind, and they call it 'good intention.' They imagine that God is thereby graciously disposed to them, whereas it is not so: and so they worship their phantom God rather than the true God."[1]

Neither do they understand how to pray, because they do not know the awfulness of God. Does not the Scripture say; he asks them: "Serve ye the Lord with fear and rejoice unto Him with trembling" (Ps. ii 11), and "with fear and trembling work out your salvation" (Phil. ii. 12)? Not wanting to look at their own works as "bad and suspicious" in the eyes of this God, "they do not assiduously call upon His grace." They assume that their good intention arises out of themselves, whereas it is a gift of God, and desire to prepare themselves for the infusion of grace.[2] "Pelagian notions are at the bottom of all this. No one acknowledges himself now to be a Pelagian, but many are so unconsciously, with their principle that free will must set to work to obtain grace."[3]

Such is the perilous position he reaches under the influence of his distaste for works, viz. a violent antagonism to free will. Man is unable to do the least thing to satisfy this Holy God.[4] The Occamist theology of the school in which he was trained here serves him in good stead, as the following sentences, which

Tauler and the 'Theologia Deutsch' relate regarding the consuming inward fires of Purgatory. Luther mentions that Tauler [like himself!] was acquainted with the '*horror conscientiæ a facie iudicii Dei.*'" "Werke," Weim. ed., 5, p. 203.

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 20 f.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 322.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 222 f.: "*Hii* (*qui vere bona faciunt*) *sciunt quod homo ex se nihil potest facere*," in contradistinction to the "Pelagians," who "*libertati arbitrii tribuunt facere quod est in se, ante gratiam.*"

are closely akin to Occam's acceptation-theory, show: "We must always be filled with anxiety, ever fear and await the Divine acceptance"; for as all our works are in themselves evil, "only those are good which God imputes as good; they are in fact something or nothing, only in so far as God accepts them or not." "The eternal God has chosen good works from the beginning that they should please Him,"[1] "but how can I ever know that my deed pleases God? How can I even know that my good intention is from God?"[2] Hence, away with the proud self-righteous ("*superbi iustitiarii*") who are so sure of their good works!

Fear, desponding humility and self-annihilation, according to Luther, are the only feelings one can cherish in front of this terrible, unaccountable God.[3] "He who despairs of himself is the one whom God accepts."[4]

He also speaks of a certain "*pavor Dei*," which is the foundation of salvation: "*trepidare et terreri*" is the best sign, as it is said in Psalm cxliii.: "Shoot out Thy arrows and Thou shalt trouble them," the "*terrens Deus*" leads to life.[5] True love does not ask any enjoyment from God, rather, he here repeats, whoever loves Him from the hope of being made eternally happy by Him, or from fear of being wretched without Him, has a sinful and selfish love ("*amor concupiscentiæ*"); but to allow the terrors of God to encompass us, to be ready to accept from Him the most bitter interior and exterior cross, to all eternity, that only is perfect love. And even with such love we are dragged into thick interior darkness.[6]

All these gloomy thoughts which cloud his mind, gather, when he comes to explain chapters viii. and ix. of the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle deals with the question of election to grace.

Luther thinks he has here found in St. Paul the doctrine of predestination, not only to heaven, but also to hell, expressed, moreover, in the strongest terms. At the same time he warns his hearers against faint-heartedness, being well aware how dangerous his views might prove to souls.

"Let no one immerse himself in these thoughts who is not purified in spirit, lest he sink into an abyss of horror and despair; the eyes of the heart must first be purified by contemplating the wounds of Christ. I discourse upon these matters solely because the trend of the lectures leads up to them, and because they are unavoidable. It is the strongest wine there is, and the most perfect food, a solid nourishment for the perfect; it is that most exalted theology of which the Apostle says (1 Cor. ii. 6): 'we

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 221.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 323.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 214.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 215–20.

speak wisdom among the perfect' . . . only the perfect and the strong should study the first book of the Sentences [because predestination is dealt with at the end of Peter Lombard's first book]; it should really be the last and not the first book; to-day many who are unprepared jump at it and then go away blinded in spirit."[1]

Luther teaches that the Apostle's doctrine is: God did not in their lifetime exercise His mercy towards the damned; He is right and not to be blamed when He follows herein His own supreme will alone. "Why then does man murmur as though God were not acting according to the law?" His will is, for every man, the highest good. Why should we not desire, and that with the greatest fervour, the fulfilment of this will, since it is a will which can in no way be evil? "You say: Yes, but for me it is evil. No, it is evil for none. The only evil is that men cannot understand God's will and do it"; they should know that even in hell they are doing God's will if it is His wish that they should be there.[2]

Hence the only way he knows out of the darkness he has himself created is recognition of, and resignation to, the possibility of a purely arbitrary damnation by God. The expressions he here makes use of for reprobation, "*inter reprobos haberi*," "*damnari*," "*morte æterna puniri*," make it plain that he demands resignation to actual reprobation and to being placed on a footing with the damned. Yet, as he always considers this resignation as the most perfect proof of acquiescence in the Will of God, it does not, according to him, include within itself a readiness to hate God, but, on the contrary, the strongest and highest love.[3] With such an exalted frame of mind, however, the actual penalty of hell would cease to exist. "It is impossible that he should remain apart from God who throws himself so entirely into the Will of God. He wills what God wills, therefore he pleases God. If he pleases God, then he is loved by God; if he is loved by God, then he is saved."[4] That he is thus cutting the ground from under his hypothesis of an inevitable predestination to hell by teaching how we can escape it, does not seem to strike him. Or does he, perhaps, mean that only those who are not predestined to hell can thus overcome the fear of hell? Will such resigna-

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 226.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 223: "*Si enim vellent quod vult Deus, etiamsi damnatos et reprobatos vellet, non haberent malum; quia vellent, quod vult Deus, et haberent in se voluntatem Dei per patientiam.*"

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 217 f.

tion be possible to him who really believes himself destined to hell, and who sees even in his resignation no means whereby he can escape it?

To such a one even the "wounds of Christ" offer no assurance and no place of refuge. They only speak to man of the God of revelation, not of the mysterious, unsearchable God. The untenable and insulting comparison between the mysterious and the revealed Supreme Being which Luther was later on to institute is here already foreshadowed.

He explains in detail how the will of man does not in the least belong to the person who wills, or the road to the runner. "All is God's, who gives and creates the will." We are all instruments of God, who works all in all. Our will is like the saw and the stick—examples which he repeatedly employs later in his harshest utterances concerning the slavery of the will. Sawing is the act of the hand which saws, but the saw is passive; the animal is beaten, not by the stick, but by him who holds the stick. So the will also is nothing, but God who wields it is everything.[1]

Hence he rejects most positively the theological doctrine that God foresees the final lot of man as something "*contingenter futurum*," i.e. that he sees his rejection as something dependent on man and brought about by his own fault. No, according to Luther, in the election of grace everything is preordained "*inflexibili et firma voluntate*," and this, His own will, is alone present in the mind of God.

Luther speaks with scorn of "our subtle theologians," who drag in their "*contingens*" and build up an election by grace on "*necessitas consequentiæ, sed non consequentis*," in accordance with the well-known scholastic ideas. "With God there is absolutely no '*contingens*,' but only with us; for no leaf ever falls from the tree to the earth without the will of the Father." Besides, the theologians—so he accuses the Scholastics without exception—"have imagined the case so, or at least have led to its being so imagined, as though salvation were obtained or lost through our own free will."[2]

We know that here he was wrong. As a matter of fact, true Scholasticism attributed the work of salvation to grace together with free will, so that two factors, the Divine and the human, or the supernatural and the natural, are mutually engaged in the same. But Luther, when here reporting the old teaching, does not mention the factor of grace, but only "*nostrum arbitrium*."

He then adds: "Thus I once understood it." If he really

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 225. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 208, 209, 210.

ever believed salvation to be exclusively the work of free will, then he erred grievously, and merely proves how defective his study, even of Gabriel Biel, had been.

He also interpreted quite wrongly the view of contemporary and earlier scholastic theologians on the love of God, and, again, by excluding the supernatural factor. He reproaches them with having, so he says, considered the love in question as merely natural ("*ex natura*") and yet as wholesome for eternal life, and he demands that all wholesome love be made to proceed "*ex Spiritu Sancto*," a thing which all theologians, even the Occamists, had insisted on. He says: "they do not know in the least what love is,"[1] "nor do they know what virtue is, because they allow themselves to be instructed on this point by Aristotle, whose definition is absolutely erroneous."[2] It makes no impression upon him—perhaps he is even ignorant of the fact—that the Scholastics consider, on good grounds, the love which loves God's goodness as goodness towards us, and which makes personal salvation its motive, compatible with the perfect love of friendship (*amicitiæ, complacentiæ*).[3] According to him, this love must be extirpated ("*amor exstirpandus*") because it is full of abominable self-seeking.[4] In its place he sets up a most perfect love (which will be described below), which includes resignation to, and even a desire for, hell-fire, a resignation such as Christ Himself manifested (!) in His abandonment to suffering.

Luther had now left the safe path of theological and ecclesiastical tradition to pursue his own ideas.

It is true that, notwithstanding his exhortation to be resigned to the holy will of God in every case, he looks with fear at the flood of blasphemies which must arise in the heart of one who fears his own irrevocable, undeserved damnation. Anxious to obviate this, or to arm the conscience against it, when pointing to the wounds of Christ he adds these words: "Should anyone, owing to overmastering temptation, come to blaspheme God, that would not involve his eternal damnation. For even towards the godless our God is not a God of impatience and cruelty. Such blasphemies are forced out of a man by the devil, therefore they may be more pleasing to God's ear than any Alleluia or song of praise. The more terrible and abominable a blasphemy is, the more pleasing it is to God when the heart feels that it does not acquiesce in it, i.e. when it is involuntary."[5]

Involuntary thoughts, to which alone he sees fit to refer, are, of course, not deserving of punishment; but are the murmurs and angry complaints against predestination to hell of which he speaks always only involuntary? The way to resignation which he mentions in the same connection is no less questionable. It

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 219. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[3] Bonaventure, in iii., dist. 27, a. 2, q. 2: "*Amor concupiscentiæ non repugnat amori amicitiæ in caritate*," etc. Cp. Thom. Aquin., 2–2, q. 23, a. 1.

[4] "Schol. Rom.," pp. 210, 218

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

consists largely in "not troubling about such thoughts."[1] But will all be able to get so far as this?

He again repeats with great insistence that "everything happens according to God's choice"; "he upon whom God does not have mercy, remains in the '*massa*'" [*perditionis*].[2] "For whom it is, it is," he adds elsewhere in German, "whom it hits, him it hits."[3] God permits at times even the elect to be reduced, as it were, to nothingness,[4] but only in order that His sole power may be made manifest and that it may quench all proud boasting; for man is so ready to believe that he can by the exercise of his free will rise again, and waxes presumptuous; but here he learns that grace exalts him before and above every choice of his own ("*ante omne arbitrium et supra arbitrium suum*").[5]

We shall not here examine more closely his grave misapprehension of the teaching of the Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, on which he tries to prop up his glaring theory concerning predestination. Suffice it to say that the principal passage to which he refers (Rom. ix. 11 ff.), according to the exegetist Cornely, is not now taken by any expositor to refer to predestination, i.e. to the selection by grace of each individual.[6] The passage treats of the promises made to the Jewish people (as a whole) which were given without desert and freely; but Israel, as St. Paul explains, has, by its fault, rendered itself unworthy of the same and excluded itself (as a whole) from the salvation which the heathen obtain by faith—a reward of Israel's misdeeds, which, in itself, is incompatible with Luther's doctrine of an undeserved predestination to hell.[7]

Luther also quotes St. Augustine, but does not interpret him correctly. He even overlooks the fact that this Father, in one of the passages alleged, says the very opposite to his new ideas on unconditional predestination to hell, and attributes in every case the fate of the damned to their own moral misdeeds. Augustine says, in his own profound, concise way, in the text quoted by Luther: "the saved

[1] "Schol. Rom." [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 228.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 224. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 229.
[5] *Ibid.*, 231.
[6] "*Commentar. in. Ep. ad Romanos*," p. 495.
[7] Formerly some few Catholic theologians found in the statements of the Apostle the so-called "*prædestinatio ad gloriam ante prævisa merita*" (though never a "*reprobatio ante prævisa merita*"); but as J. Th. Beelen remarks in his "*Commentarius in Ep. ad Romanos*" (1854), none of them ever sought for an exegetical foundation for the same. Cornely, l.c., p. 495 *sq.*

may not pride himself on his merits, and the damned may only bewail his demerits."[1] In his meditations on the ever-inscrutable mystery he regards the sinner's fault as entirely voluntary, and his revolt against the eternal God as, on this account, worthy of eternal damnation. Augustine teaches that "to him as to every man who comes into this world" salvation was offered with a wealth of means of grace and with all the merits of Christ's bitter death on the cross.[2]

Luther also quoted the Bible passages regarding God's will for the salvation of all men, but only in order to say of them: "such expressions are always to be understood exclusively of the elect." It is merely "wisdom of the flesh" to attempt to find a will of God that all men be saved in the assurance of St. Paul: "God wills that all men shall be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4), or "in the passages which say, that He gave His Son for us, that He created man for eternal life, and that everything was created for man, but man for God that he might enjoy Him eternally."[3]

Other objections which Luther makes he sets aside with the same facility by a reference to the thoughts he has developed above.[4] Thus the first: Why did God give to man free will by means of which he can merit either reward or punishment? His answer is: Where is this free will? Man has no free will for doing what is good. Then a second objection: "God damns no one without sin, and he who is forced to sin is damned unjustly." The answer to this is new: God ordains it so that those who are to be damned are gladly, even though of necessity, in sin ("*dat voluntarie velle in peccato esse et manere et diligere iniquitatem*"). Finally, the last objection: "Why does God give them commandments which He does not will them to keep, yea hardens their will so much that they desire to act contrary to the law? Is not God in this case the cause of their sinning and being damned?" "Yes, that is the difficulty," he admits, "which, as a matter of fact, has the most force; it is the weightiest of all. But to it the Apostle makes a special answer when he teaches: God so wills it, and God Who thus wills, is not evil. Everything is His, just as the clay belongs to the potter and waits on his

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 230, and August., "Enchiridion ad Laurent.," c. 98, Migne, P. L., xl., p. 278.

[2] S. Aug., "Contra Iulianum," 6, n. 8, 14, 24; "Opus imperf.," 1, c. 64, c. 132 *seq.*, 175; "De catechiz. rudibus," n. 52; "De spiritu et litt.," c. 33; "Retract," 1, c. 10, n. 2. Cp. Cornely, p. 494, on some exegetical peculiarities of Augustine.

[3] "Schol. Rom.," p. 212.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

service." Enough, he continues, "God commands that the elect shall be saved, and that those who are destined for hell shall be entangled in evil in order that He may show forth His mercy and also His anger."

It makes one shudder to hear how he cuts short the sighs of the unhappy soul which sees itself a victim of God's harshness. It complains: "It is a hard and bitter lot that God should seek His honour in my misery!" And Luther replies: "See, there we have the wisdom of the flesh! *My* misery; 'my,' 'my,' that is the voice of the flesh. Drop the 'my' and say: Be Thou honoured, O Lord. . . . So long as you do not do that, you are seeking your own will more than the will of God. We must judge of God in a different manner from that in which we judge of man. God owes no man anything."

"With this hard doctrine," he concludes, "the knife is placed at the throat of holiness-by-works and fleshly wisdom and therefore the flesh is naturally incensed, and breaks out into blasphemies; but man must learn that his salvation does not depend upon his acts, but that it lies quite outside of him, namely, in God, Who has chosen him."

He attempts, however, to mingle softer tones with the voices of despair, which, he admits, these theories have let loose. This he can only do at the expense of his own teaching, or by fining it down. He says: whoever is terrified and confused, but then tries to abandon himself with indifference to the severity of God, he, let this be his comfort, is not of the number of those predestined to hell. For only those who are really to be rejected are not afraid [?], "they pay no heed to the danger and say, if I am to be damned, so be it!" On the other hand, confusion and fear are signs of the "*spiritus contribulatus*," which, according to his promise, God never rejects (Ps. l.).

After all, then, we are forced to ask, according to this, is not man to be saved by his own act, namely, the act of heroic indifference to his eternity? For this act remains an act of man: "Whoever is filled with the fear of God, and, taking courage, throws and precipitates himself into the truth of the promises of God, he will be saved, and be one of the elect."[1]

3. The Fight against "Holiness-by-Works" and the Observantines in the Commentary on Romans

His ideas on predestination were not the direct cause of Luther's belittling of human effort and the value of good works; the latter tendency was present in him previous to his adoption of rigid predestinarianism; nor does he ever attribute to election by grace any diminution of man's powers or duties, whether in the case of the chosen or of the

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 212 ff.

reprobate. The same commandments are given to those whom God's terrible decree has destined for hell as to the elect; they possess the same human abilities, the same weaknesses. It was not predestination which led him in the first instance to attribute such strength to concupiscence in man, and to invest it, as he ultimately did, with an actually sinful and culpable character.

His ideas concerning the absolute corruption of the children of Adam, even to the extinction of any liberty in the doing of what is good, had another origin, and, in their development, were influenced far more by false mysticism than by the predestinarian delusion.

He approached the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans in the conviction that, in this Epistle, he would find the sanction of his earlier efforts against the self-righteous and "holy-by-works," against whom his peculiar mysticism had still further prejudiced him. From the very outset he interprets the great Apostolic document on the calling of the heathen and the Jews to salvation as directed exclusively against those who, according to him, were imperilling the Church; against those who (whether in his own Order or in Christendom generally) laid stress on the importance of works, on the duty of fulfilling observances and the merit of exercises of virtue for gaining heaven, and who were unmindful of the righteousness which Christ gives us. This is not the place to point out how Paul is speaking in quite another sense, against those Jewish Christians who still adhered to the works of the Mosaic Law, of the merely relative value of works, of the liberty which Christianity imparts and of the saving power of faith.

Luther, however, in the very first lines, tells the "holy-by-works" that the whole purpose of the Epistle to the Romans is a driving back and rooting out of the wisdom and righteousness of the flesh. Among the heathen and the Jews were to be found those who, though "devoted in their hearts to virtue," yet had not suppressed all self-satisfaction in the same, and looked upon themselves as "righteous and good men"; in the Church, according to Paul, all self-righteousness and wisdom must be torn out of the affections, and self-complacency. God willed to save us not by our own righteousness but by an extraneous righteousness ("*non per domesticam sed per extraneam iustitiam vult salvare*"), viz. by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and, owing to the exterior righteousness which Christ gives ("*externa quæ ex Christo in nobis est iustitia*"), there can be

no boasting, nor must there be "any depression on account of the sufferings and trials which come to us from Christ."[1]

"Christ's righteousness and His gifts," he says, "shine in the true Christian. . . . If any man possesses natural and spiritual advantages, yet this is not considered by God as being his wisdom, righteousness and goodness ('*non ideo coram Deo talis reputatur*'), rather, he must wait in humility, as though he possessed nothing, for the pure mercy of God, to see whether He will look upon him as righteous and wise. God only does this if he humbles himself deeply. We must learn to regard spiritual possessions and works of righteousness as worthless for obtaining the righteousness of Christ, we must renounce the idea that these have any value in God's sight and merit a reward, otherwise we shall not be saved" ("*opera iusta velint nihil reputare*," etc.).[2]

Any pretext, or even none at all, serves to bring him back again and again in the work to the "Pelagian-minded *iustitiarii*." It is possible that amongst these the "Observantines" ranked first. Our thoughts revert to those of his brother monks, whose cause he had at first defended in the internal struggle within the Congregation, only to turn on them unmercifully afterwards. On one occasion he mentions by name the "Observants," reproaching them with trying to outshine one another in their zeal for God, while at the same time they had no love of their neighbour, whereas, according to the passage he is just expounding, "the fulness of the law is love."[3] He would also appear to be referring to them, when, on another occasion, he rails at such monks, who by their behaviour bring their whole profession into disgrace.

"They exalt themselves against other members of their profession," he cries, "as though they were clean and had no evil odour about them,"[4] and continues in the style of his monastic discourse on the "Little Saints" mentioned above (p. 69 f.). "And yet before, behind and within they are a pig-market and sty of sows . . . they wish to withdraw from the rest, whereas they ought, were they really virtuous, to help them to conceal their faults. But in place of patient succour there is nothing in them but peevishness and a desire to be far away ('*quærunt fugam . . . tediosi sunt et nolunt esse in communione aliorum*'). They will not serve those who are good for nothing nor be their companions; they

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 1 ff. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 2 f.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 305. "*Observantes invicem propter Deum pugnant, sed dilectionis præceptum nihil attendunt.*"

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 334. Correct what follows, from vol. vi., xlii, 4.

only desire to be the superiors and companions of the worthy, the perfect and the sound. Therefore they run from one place to another."[1]

The struggle of which this is a picture continued among the German Augustinians. In the spring, 1520, a similar conflict broke out in the Cologne Province, one side having the sympathy of the Roman Conventuals.[2] We can well understand how the General of the Order in Rome was not disposed to grant the exemptions claimed by the Observantines of the Saxon Congregation against his own Provincials.

Luther brandishes his sharp blade against the "spiritually minded, the proud, the stiff-necked, who seek peace in works and in the flesh, the *iustitiarii*,"[3] without making any sharp distinction between the actual Observantines and the "self-righteous."

[1] Cp. above, p. 88 ff., Luther's letter to Spenlein, who had left his monastery for that at Memmingen.

[2] Kolde, "Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation," p. 325.

[3] "Schol. Rom.," p. 20, he speaks against the "*spiritualis et subtilior idolatria*"; p. 45, against those who are "*vane gloriosi*" in their exterior observances; p. 75, against the "*nimis iusti*," "*nimis intelligentes*" and "*nimis quærentes*," who are "*incorrigibiles in suo sensu*"; p. 83, a fresh outburst against those who "*in suis iustitiis pacem in carne quærunt.*" . . . "*Nihil capiunt quia sunt superbi. . . . Præsumunt quod Deus eorum sensum et opera approbabit, quia ipsis iustus et rectus apparet*"; p. 86, he again attacks "*omnes superbi in ecclesia spirituales, qui sunt magnorum et multorum operum.*" Then, to omit many digressions against the "*iustitiarii*," and merely to quote from the last part of the work, he says, p. 220, of the righteous in his own sense by whom damnation would be willingly accepted ("*libentes damnari volunt*"), that they shame the swarm of others, "*qui sibi merita fingunt et pingunt ac bona quærunt, fugiunt mala et in absconditis suis nihil habent*"; these are, according to p. 221, "*superbi iustitiarii, qui certi sunt de bonis operibus suis*," or, according to p. 273, those "*in sua iustitia præsumentes.*" The "*sapientes iustitiarii*," according to p. 331, destroy the temple of God by their false wisdom and their observances.

Superintendent H. Hering has expressed himself candidly in the "Theologische Studien und Kritiken" (50, 1877, p. 627) on certain notable passages in Luther's Commentary on the Psalms: "His anger," so he says, "is almost more vehement against the Observantines than against the heretics"; to their claim to exemptions and dispensations Luther opposes the assertion that it is impossible to dispense from obedience. He refers, among other passages of Luther's, to the beginning of his interpretation of Psalm xxxi. ("*Beati quorum remissæ*," etc.), where apparently the Observantines are denounced as schismatics on account of their opposition to Staupitz and his plans: "*similiter et superstitiosi seu schismatici abiiciunt per suam singularitatem suum prælatum, in quo Christus eis præficitur, quorum hodie maior est numerus (quam hæreticorum).*" "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 174. In earlier passages (3, p. 172) he speaks against those who, in the singularity of their observances, "*reiecta obedientia et fide suam statuunt iustitiam*" and declares them, on account of their

With regard to himself, he admits that he is so antagonistic to the "*iustitiarii*," that he is opposed to all scrupulous observance of "*iustitia*," to all regulations and strict ordinances:

pride, to be deniers of Christ, and (p. 61) against the upholders of special statutes who fight for their ceremonies and their "*vanitas observantiæ exterioris*," who "*compunguntur in habitu*," etc. We seem to hear echoes of the struggle that was going on in the Order not only in the passages from the sermons quoted above (p. 80 ff.), but also in such as the following, from the year 1516: These "*iustitiarii*" are "*irritabilissimi omnium*"; they are "*prompti alios vindicare . . . iudicare, condemnare, quœrulantes et accusantes, quod iniuriam sustineant, ipsi recte facientes*"; but "they do not fulfil the spirit of the law" ("Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 160; cp. 158 Weim. ed., 1, p. 114). He puts in the mouth of the "*iustitiarii*": "*Tu peius vivis quam ego*," and describes how they fancy themselves quite safe and have no need of Christ as their physician (*ibid.*, p. 128; Weim. ed., 1, p. 85). He had already accused them above of disobedience and rebellion, and his charging them with revolt against their lawful superior ("*abiiciunt per suam singularitatem suum prælatum*") leads one to suppose he had in view the opposition of the Observantines to Staupitz's plans. We may perhaps find in these passages reason for applying the attacks in the Commentary on Romans to the Erfurt Observantines, though there is no actual proof of this.

Does not Staupitz himself, who was Vicar-General of the Congregation, in certain of his works (published after 1515) sometimes oppose the spirit of the Observantines, such as it appears to him? Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 68 ff. It would be surprising if no echo of a conflict which touched him so nearly had obtruded itself into his writings. Unfortunately historical data regarding the external progress of the breach are wanting. Braun fully recognises Luther's alienation and that it had grounds; thus of Luther's cutting address delivered before the Chapter of the Order at Gotha on May 1, 1515, he says: "It is obvious that sad experiences lay behind these words. . . . The tendency to quarrelsomeness, which, it cannot be denied, was apparent in Luther at a later date—though much may be said in excuse of it—may have made itself felt even then, long before his breach with the Church." The "*primaria nostræ unionis factio*," which Barthol. Usingen mentions (see N. Paulus, "Usingen," p. 16, n. 5, and Oergel, "Der junge Luther," p. 132), brought Luther's friend, Johann Lang, in the summer of 1511 from Erfurt to Wittenberg. He joined Luther in passing over from the stricter to the more liberal party supported by Staupitz. For Cochlæus's statement regarding Luther: "*ad Staupitzium defecit*," see above, p. 38. The relations existing between the Observantines and the Conventuals, even among other Orders where a similar movement towards reform was taking place, are instructive. There was, for instance, a division in the Dominican Order. The Observantine priories of the so-called German Province of the Dominicans (*prov. teutonica*)—as a matter of fact, the Province of South Germany—were permitted to choose a Provincial, while the Conventual priories formed a special German Congregation (*congregatio Germanica*), with a Vicar-General at their head. Since 1511 Johann Faber had been Vicar-General, but he too was in favour of a reform. The cause of the conflict in this case arose from the Observantines trying to bring the Conventuals to their way of thinking by appealing to ecclesiastical and secular authority. Cp. N. Paulus in the "Histor. Jahrbuch," 17, 1896, p. 44, and in "Die deutschen Dominikaner im Kampfe gegen Luther," 1903, p. 299.

"The very word righteousness vexes me: if anyone were to steal from me, it would hurt me less than being obliged to listen to the word righteousness. It is a word which the jurists always have on their lips, but there is no more unlearned race than these men of the law, save, perhaps, the men of good intention and superior reason ('*bonæ-intentionarii seu sublimatæ rationis*'); for I have experienced both in myself and in others, that when we were righteous, God mocked at us."[1]

4. Attack on Predisposition to Good and on Free Will

The assertion of the complete corruption of human nature owing to the continuance of original sin and the inextinguishable tinder of concupiscence, arose from the above-mentioned position which Luther had taken up with regard to self-righteousness.

Man remains, according to what Luther says in the Commentary on Romans, in spite of all his veneer of good works, so alienated from God that he "does not love but hates the law which forces him to what is good and forbids what is evil; his will, far from seeking the law, detests it. Nature persists in its evil desires contrary to the law; it is always full of evil concupiscence when it is not assisted from above." This concupiscence, however, is sin. Everything that is good is due only to grace, and grace must bring us to acknowledge this and to "seek Christ humbly and so be saved."[2]

The descriptions of human doings which the author gives us in eloquent language are not wanting in fidelity and truth to nature, though we cannot approve his inferences. He has a keen eye on others and is unmerciful in his delineation of the faults which he perceived in the pious people around him.

He spies out many who only act from a desire for the praise of men, and who wish to appear, but not really to be, good. How ready are such, he says, to depreciate themselves with apparent humility. Others only do what is right because it gives them pleasure, i.e. from inclination and without any higher motive. Others do it from vain self-complacency; yea, selfishness is present in almost all, and mars their works. Outward routine and a business-like righteousness spoils a great deal. It is to be

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 273. With the above is connected the fact that in his mysticism he peremptorily demands the surrender of all rights and privileges.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

deplored that, like the Pharisees, they only keep what is commanded in view and long for the rewards of a busy and petty virtue.[1]

In such descriptions he is easily carried too far and is sometimes even obviously unjust. Thus, for instance, of evil practices he makes conscious theories, in order the more readily to gain the upper hand of his adversaries. "They teach," he cries, "that it is only necessary to keep the law by works and not with the heart . . . their efforts are not accompanied with the least inward effort, everything is wholly external."[2]

In respect of the doctrine of original sin and its consequences in man, he not only magnifies enormously the strength of the concupiscence which remains after baptism, without sufficiently taking into account the spiritual means by which it can be repressed, but gives the most open expression to his belief that concupiscence is actually sin; it is the persistence of original sin, rendering every man actually culpable, even without any consent of the will. The "*Non concupisces*" of the Ten Commandments—which the Apostle emphasises in his Epistle to the Romans, though in another sense—Luther makes out to be such a prohibition that, by the mere existence of concupiscence, it is daily and hourly sinfully transgressed. He pays no attention to the theology of the Church, which had hitherto seen in the "*Non concupisces*" a prohibition of any voluntary consent to a concupiscence existing without actual sin.

His attack on free will is very closely bound up with his ideas on concupiscence.

"Concupiscence with weakness is against the law 'Thou shalt not covet,' and it is deadly [a mortal sin], but the gracious God does not impute it on account of the work of salvation which has been commenced in [pardoned] man." "Even a venial sin," he teaches in the same passage, "is, according to its nature [owing to human nature which is entirely alienated from God], a mortal sin, but the Creator does not impute ('*imputat*') it as mortal sin to the man whom he chooses to perfect and render whole."[3]

He makes various attempts to deduce from concupiscence the absolute want in the will of freedom to do what is good. There

[1] "Schol. Rom.," pp. 11, 45, 84, 94.

[2] The reader should notice his exaggerations regarding the teachers of whose nominalistic tendency he disapproves: "*docent, quod lex opere tantum sit implenda, etiam sine impletione cordis. . . . Nec ipsi minimo saltem cordis conatu eadem aggrediuntur, sed solummodo externo opere.*" *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

is not the slightest doubt that he does deny this freedom, though, on the other hand, he grants so much to liberty in his admonitions concerning predestination (see below, p. 219) that he practically retracts his denial. The position he takes up with regard to grace ought to be a test of what he actually held : did he look upon grace as in every case irresistible ? But on this very point he is as yet indisposed to commit himself as he will not hesitate to do later, to a positive, erroneous "yes." In short, though he stands for a denial of liberty, he has not yet seen his way to solve all the difficulties.

If we seek some specimens illustrating the course of his ideas regarding lack of liberty, we find, perhaps, the strongest utterance in his comments on Romans viii. 28 : "Free will apart from grace possesses absolutely no power for righteousness, it is necessarily in sin. Therefore St. Augustine in his book against Julian terms it 'rather an enslaved than a free will.' But after the obtaining of grace it becomes really free, at least as far as salvation is concerned. The will is, it is true, free by nature, but only for what comes within its province, not for what is above it, being bound in the chain of sin and therefore unable to choose what is good in God's sight."[1] Here Luther makes no distinction between natural and supernatural good, but excludes both from our choice ; in fact there is no such thing as natural goodness, for what nature performs alone is only sin.

"Where is our righteousness," he exclaims rhetorically some pages before this, "where are our works, where is the liberty of choice, where the presupposed '*contingens*' (see above, p. 193) ? This is what must be preached, this is the way to bring the wisdom of the flesh to the dust ! The Apostle does so here. In former passages he cut off its hands, its feet, its tongue ; here he seizes it [the wisdom of the flesh which speaks in defence of free will] and makes an end of it. Here, like a flash of light, it is seen to possess nothing in itself, all its possession being in God."[2] This, then, is Luther's conclusion : the elect are not saved by the co-operation of their free will, but by the Divine decree ; not by their merits, but by the unalterable edict from above by means of which they conquer all the difficulties in the way of salvation. He is silent here as to whether the elect may not succumb to sin temporarily, either by the misuse of liberty, or from lack of compelling grace.

Towards the end of the Commentary he asserts quite definitely that we are unable to formulate even a good intention with our human powers which could in any way [even in the natural order] be pleasing to God.

He here examines certain opponents, who rightly denied this

[1] The passage here referred to in St. Aug. is in "*Contra Iulianum*," l. 8, c. 8 ; Migne, P. L. xliv., p. 689. Augustine there when he speaks of "*servum potius quam liberum arbitrium*" does so in another sense, though Luther saw fit to borrow the expression for the title of his own later work of 1525 : "*De servo arbitrio*."

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 209.

nability, "otherwise man would be forced to sin." Further on he attributes to all theologians the teaching of the Occamists (see above, p. 75): "therewith we receive without fail the infusion of God's grace"; a proposition which certainly sounds Pelagian. He passes over one point which true scholastic theologians did not omit, viz. that God's supernatural assistance "prevents" our natural will, raises the same into the order of grace, and thus enables us to merit salvation. Further, again disregarding the scholastic teaching, he foists upon all theologians the idea that, having once formed our intention, "we need have no further anxiety, or trouble ourselves to invoke God's grace."[1] Such is, according to him, the position of his opponents.

In his answer he does not assert, as regards the first proposition, that God forces us to evil; "the wicked," he says, "do what they wish, perhaps even with good intentions, but God allows them to sin even in their good works." Of this, according to him, his opponents must be aware and therefore ought not to act with so much assurance and certainty as though they were really performing good works. Everyone should rather say: "Who knows whether God's grace is working this in me?" Then only does man acknowledge "that he can do nothing of himself"; only thus can we escape Pelagianism, which is the curse of the self-righteous. "But because they are persuaded that it is always within their power to do what they can, and therefore also to possess grace [here he is utilising some of the real weaknesses of Occamism], therefore they do nothing but sin all the time in their assurance."[2]

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 322.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 323. In connection with the proposition at the commencement of this division: "Man can of himself do nothing," Luther attacks the mediæval theological axiom: "*Facienti quod est in se, Deus non denegat gratiam*" (in his Commentary on the Psalms, Weim. ed., 4, p. 262, he already gives it as: "*Deus infallibiliter dat gratiam*"). In order to make the matter clear we may state in advance that, according to Catholic doctrine, we cannot with the powers of nature merit grace either "*de condigno*" or "*de congruo*"; grace excludes any natural acquiring of the same; man is only able to dispose himself negatively for the acquisition of grace, not positively, i.e. not in such a way as to demand grace as a right. "*Homo non movet se ipsum ad hoc, quod adipiscatur divinum auxilium, quod supra ipsum est, sed potius ad hoc adipiscendum a Deo movetur.*" Thom., "*Summa contra gent.*," 3, c. 149. In accordance with this, true Scholasticism did not and could not wish to express by the proposition "*Facienti quod est in se*," etc., any real meriting of grace by our natural powers. Luther's attacks, which presuppose this, were therefore of no avail against the true theology of the Middle Ages. The natural acts recognised by theology as good are generally unimportant, have no supernatural merit, and cannot positively qualify for grace in the sense of "*Facienti*, etc." The axiom implies rather that whoever does his part, roused and moved thereto by actual grace, will arrive at saving grace and reach heaven; it presupposes a negative preparation; God in His mercy does not refuse His grace to whoever does his part. It was therefore presumed that the actual grace of God was at work in every good work which man performed, inviting to,

Luther does not here ask himself what else man is to perform in order to possess the grace of God, beyond doing what he can, humbling himself and praying for grace, as all preceding ages had taught. He is still looking for an assurance of salvation by some other method. Only at a later date does he learn, or thinks he learns, how it is to be obtained (by faith alone). Here he merely says: "It is the greatest plague to speak of the signs of possessing grace and thereby to lull man into security." He has not yet found the assurance of the "Gracious God," as he is to express it later.

Meanwhile he proceeds, ostensibly following St. Paul, to denounce the principle "he who does what he can," etc., like wise freewill and the possibility of fulfilling the law.

Paul teaches, for instance, in Romans viii. 3 f.: What the Mosaic law could not do on account of the rebellion of the flesh in man, namely, conquer sin, that God did by the incarnation of His Son, who overcame sin and helps us to fulfil the law; in

co-operating with, and furthering it. Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 577 ff. The mediæval theological work most widely known in Luther's time, the "*Compendium theologicæ veritatis*," says expressly: "Without grace no one is able to do his part so as to prepare himself for salvation" (l. 5, c. 11). We find there no trace of the Pelagianism with which Luther so bitterly reproached the whole theology of the Middle Ages. (See Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 576, n. 5). "Is mere co-operation with grace Pelagian?" Denifle asks (p. 577). And what authorised Luther to say in the Schmalkald Articles (Müller-Kolde, "Die symbolischen Bücher der evangel. luther. Kirche," 1907, p. 311) that the teaching "*si faciat homo quantum in se est, Deum largiri ei certo suam gratiam*," was a *portentum*, a heathenish dogma from which it followed that Christ had died in vain?

Luther himself had previously, in his Commentary on the Psalms (Weim. ed., 4, p. 262), written, that God gives His grace without fail to him who does his part, and yet he thereby assumed, with the whole of theology, that grace and glory were not on that account merited, but given us without any desert on our part. (Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 441.) The passage reads: "*Hinc recte doctores, quod homini facienti quod est in se, Deus infallibiliter dat gratiam, et licet non de condigno sese possit ad gratiam præparare, quia est incomparabilis, tamen bene de congruo, propter promissionem istam Dei et pactum misericordiæ.*" Denifle here remarks aptly: "We must not overlook the fact, that Luther here formulates the proposition '*Facienti*,' etc., in the nominalistic sense." What is more important is that Luther, immediately before, had rightly excluded all supernatural merit from natural action ("*non ex meritis, sed ex mera promissione miserentis Dei*").

The Nominalists of Occam's school went much further in allowing a natural preparation for grace (though not a meriting) than the recognised representatives of Scholasticism. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 586: "The preparation for saving grace takes place, according to the Occamists, by purely natural acts under the general concurrence of God; particular concurrence is, according to them and speaking generally, the saving grace itself, whereas, according to Scholasticism proper, special concurrence, i.e. actual grace, intervenes between the

those who are not born again, sin lives as the "law of sin," because they are "weak" (ἠσθένει) against the attacks of concupiscence; on the other hand, the saving grace of the gospel frees us from the "law of sin and death." To the proposition with which Paul introduces this doctrine, viz. that it had not been possible for the law (i.e. the Mosaic Law) to conquer sin, Luther simply adds: "where now is the freedom of the will?[1] . . . the holy Apostle Paul says here expressly that the law was unable to condemn [overcome] sin, or even the weakness which proceeds from the flesh. This is nothing else but the doctrine which I have so frequently been insisting upon, that a fulfilling of the law through our own efforts is impossible; it cannot even be said that we have the power to will and to be able, in such a way as God would have us, viz. by grace [thus it is possible to us to perform what is naturally good]; for otherwise grace would not be necessary, but only useful, and otherwise the sin of Adam would not have corrupted our nature, but have left it unimpaired. . . . It is true that the law of nature is written in the hearts of all; reason also has a natural desire for what is good, but this is selfish, being directed to our own good, not to that which pleases God; only faith working by love is directed towards God. All that nature desires and acquires, goodness, wisdom, virtue and whatever else there is, are evil goods ('*male bona sunt*'), because nature, by original sin, is blinded in its knowledge and chained in its affections, and therefore cannot know God, nor love Him above all things nor yet refer all to Him.

natural and the supernatural, i.e. saving grace, and is necessary for man's preparation for the reception of the latter; the general concurrence on the other hand is represented as insufficient because it belongs to the natural order. (See above, pp. 141 ff.) Nevertheless, the Nominalists, as A. Weiss points out (Denifle, 1^2, p. 578, n. 2), came to expound their theory quite satisfactorily. See Altenstaig, "Lexicon theolog.," Venet., 1583, fol. 163, s.v. *Facere quod in se est.* Still, Denifle is right when he says (p. 441) that the reproach of Pelagianism later on urged against them by Luther did to some extent apply to the Occamists.

The deeper ground, however, which led Luther in the above passages of the Commentary on Romans to attack the "*Facienti*," etc., was that, in his antagonism against the good works of the self-righteous, he had, with the assistance of pseudo-mysticism, reached a point where he denied that any vital act on the part of man had any potency for the working out of salvation. In the work of salvation he allows of no power of choice: "The fulfilling of the law by our own efforts is absolutely impossible"; "free will is altogether in sin and cannot choose what is good in God's sight." See vol. ii., xiv. 3. Cp. W. Braun, "Die Bedeutung der Concupiscenz bei Luther," pp. 215, 217, 219, 221.

Protestant theologians could, moreover, have found the axiom "*Facienti*," etc., duly explained in the Catholic sense, with its biblical and patristic supports, even in the ordinary Catholic handbooks of theology, which would have obviated much misapprehension; cp., for instance, H. Hurter, "*Theologiæ specialis pars altera*,"[11] Innsbruck, 1903 (Compendium 3), p. 65 *seq.*, 72 *seq.*

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 183.

Therefore it follows that, without faith and love, man is unable to desire, have, or do anything that is good, but only evil, even when he does what is good." "Without love, i.e. without the assistance of an external and higher power, he sins continually against the law 'Thou shalt not covet,' for this commandment requires that we should not appropriate or seek anything for ourselves, but live, act and think for God in all things. This commandment is simply beyond us."[1]

His object in thus disparaging liberty is not for the present grounded on the Almighty Power of God, as though this stood in its way, or, as was the case later, on predestination, as though its irrefutable decree were incompatible with liberty, but merely on his exaggeration of the results of original sin with regard to doing what is good (i.e. on concupiscence); he simply moves along the old lines of his distaste for good works and for so-called self-righteousness.[2]

His misinterpretation of the Scholastics, due partly to ignorance, partly to the strength of his prejudice against them, here did him very notable service. He says on one occasion: "In their arbitrary fashion they make out that, on the infusion of grace, the whole of original sin is remitted in everyone just like all actual sin, as though sin could thus be removed at once, in the same way as darkness is dispelled by light. . . . It is true their Aristotle made sin and righteousness to consist in works. Either I never understood them, or they did not express themselves well."[3] Here there can be no doubt that the former hypothesis is the correct one. That he did not understand his teachers and the school books is apparent from the following remark: If sin were completely removed in confession ("*omnia ablata et evacuata*"), then he who comes from confession ought to prefer himself to all others, and not look upon himself as a sinner like the rest. Even the Occamists never provided the slightest ground for such an inference, though they admitted in the justified the entire remission of all sin, original as well as actual. Luther had said in the very passage of the Commentary on Romans just quoted: "the remission of sin is, it is true, a real remission, yet not a removal of sin; the removal is only to be hoped for ("*quod non sit ablatio peccati, nisi in spe*")

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 183 f.
[2] Cp. *ibid.*, pp. 114, 185, 187, 244.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

from the giving of grace; grace commences the process of the removal in this way, that the sin is no longer imputed as sin."[1] But, without recalling his own admission that he may possibly have misunderstood the Scholastics, he goes on to speak of the "deliria" of such Doctors.

5. Luther rudely sets aside the older doctrine of Virtue and Sin

In his Commentary on Romans Luther enters upon the domain of theological and philosophical discussion regarding the questions of natural and supernatural morality, the state of grace and the infused habit, sometimes with subtilty, sometimes with coarse invective, but owing to the limits of the present work we are unable to follow him except quite cursorily.

The manner in which he flings his "curses" at the doctrines of Scholasticism is distinctive of him; he says they are entirely compounded of pride and ignorance with regard to sin, to God and the law;[2] "cursed be the word '*formatum charitate*,' and also the distinction between works according to the substance of the deed and the intention of the Lawgiver."[3] There is perhaps no previous instance of a learned, exegetical treatise intended for academic consumption being thus spiced with curses.

Certain of Luther's remarks on his practical experience call for consideration. Such is the following: "Everywhere in the Church great relapses after confession are now noticeable. People are confident that they are justified instead of first awaiting justification, and therefore the devil has an easy task with such false assurance of safety, and overthrows men. All this is due to making righteousness consist in works. But whoever thinks like a Christian can find this out for himself.[4]

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 108 f. Cp. p. 178, where he complains that they had reached the "*nocentissima fraus, ut baptizati vel absoluti, statim se sine omni peccato arbitrantes, securi fierent de adepta iustitia et manibus remissis quieti, nullius sc. conscii peccati, quod gemitu et lachrymis lugendo et laborando expugnarent atque expurgarent. Igitur peccatum est in spirituali homine relictum*," etc. It is clear that the continuance of the "*fomes peccati*" is confused with the continuance of sin and the languor which is frequently due to weakness after the extirpation of sin, with a languor which must necessarily set in. The "grace which is given" he sometimes looks upon as actual, sometimes as saving grace. To follow him through all his erroneous notions would be endless.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

He gives the following exhortation with great emphasis and almost as though he had made an astounding discovery: "Whoever goes to confession, let him not believe that he gets rid of his burden and can then live in peace."[1] His new doctrine of sin, which he discloses in the same passage, lies at the bottom of this; the baptised and the absolved must on no account forthwith consider themselves free from sin, on the contrary "they must not fancy themselves sure of the righteousness they have obtained and allow their hands to drop listlessly as though they were not conscious of any sin, for they have yet to fight against it and exterminate it with sighs and tears, with sadness and effort."[2]

"Sin, therefore, still remains in the spiritual man for his exercise in the life of grace, for the humbling of his pride, for the driving back of his presumption; whoever does not exert himself zealously in the struggle against it, is in danger of being condemned even though he cease to sin any more ('*sine dubio habet, unde damnetur*'). We must carry on a war with our desires, for they are culpable ('*culpa*'), they are really sins and render us worthy of damnation; only the mercy of God does not impute them to us ('*imputare*') when we fight manfully against them, calling upon God's grace."[3]

There are few passages in the Commentary where his false conception of the entire corruption of human nature by original sin and concupiscence comes out so plainly as in the words just quoted. We see here too how this conception leads him to the denial of all liberty for doing what is good, and to the idea of imputation.

We can well understand that he needed St. Augustine to assist him to cover all this. And yet, as though to emphasise his own devious course, he quotes, among other passages, one in which Augustine confutes the view of any sin being present in man simply by reason of concupiscence.

"If we do not consent to concupiscence," Augustine says, "it is no sin in those who are regenerate, so that, even if the '*Non concupisces*' is infringed, yet the injunction of Jesus Sirach (xviii. 30) 'Go not after thy lusts' is observed. It is merely a manner of speaking to call concupiscence sin ("*modo quodam loquendi*"), because it sprang from sin, and, when it is victorious, causes sin."[4] To this statement of the Father of the Church, which is so antagonistic to his own ideas, Luther can only add:

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 179.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 178. See above, p. 209, n. 1.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 178.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 181. The passage quoted from Augustine is in "*De nuptiis et concupiscentia ad Valerium*," l. 1, c. 23; Migne, P. L., xliv., col. 428.

that, certainly, concupiscence is in this way merely the cause and effect of sin, but not formally sinful ("*causaliter et effectualiter, non formaliter*"); Augustine himself had taught in another passage,[1] that owing to the mere existence of concupiscence, we are able to do what is good only in an imperfect way, not well and perfectly ("*facere, non perficere*"; cp. Rom vii.. 18); that we ought, however, to strive to act well and perfectly "if we wish to attain to the perfection of righteousness" ("*perficere bonum, est non concupiscere*").[2]

St. Augustine's words, which are much to the point if taken in the right sense, only encouraged Luther in his opposition to the Scholastics; he points out to them that Augustine's manner is not theirs, and that at least he supports his statements by Holy Scripture when speaking of the desires which persist without the consent of the will; they on the other hand come along without Bible proofs and thus with less authority; those old Doctors quieted consciences with the voice of the Apostle, but these new ones do not do so at all, rather they force the Divine teaching into the bed of their own abstractions; for instance, they derive from Aristotle their theory as to how virtues and vices dwell in the soul, viz. as the form exists in the subject; all comprehension of the difference between flesh and spirit is thus made impossible.

The question which here forces itself upon Luther, viz. how virtue and vice exist in the soul, is of fundamental importance for his view of ethics, and, as it frequently occurs in the Commentary, it must not be passed over.

When he says that virtues and vices do not adhere to the soul, he means the same as what he elsewhere expresses more clearly, viz. that "it depends merely on the gracious will of God whether a thing is good or bad."[3]

"Nothing is good of its own nature, nothing is bad of its own nature; the will of God makes it good or bad."[4]

[1] "*Contra Julianum*," l. 3, c. 26; Migne, P. L., xliv., col. 733 *sq.*

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 182.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[4] *Ibid.* "*Bonitas Dei facit nos bonos et opera nostra bona; quia non essent in se bona, nisi quia Deus reputat ea bona. Et tantum sunt vel non sunt, quantum ille reputat vel non reputat. Idcirco nostrum reputare vel non reputare nihil est. Qui sic sapit, semper pavidus est, semper Dei reputationem timet et expectat. Idcirco nescit superbire et contendere, sicut faciunt superbi iustitiarii, qui certi sunt de bonis operibus suis. Perversa itaque est definitio virtutis apud Aristotelem, quod ipsa nos perficit et opus eius laudabile reddit.*" The nominalistic doctrine of acceptation also comes out in Luther's Heidelberg Disputation ("Werke," Weim. ed., 1, pp. 352, 356), though he explains it in such a fashion that it is clear he does not wish to go as far as Occam's paradox to be mentioned immediately. He answers the objection that the same act cannot be pleasing and displeasing to God at the same time, thus: "The Scholastics are acquainted only with an

This is the merest Nominalism, akin to Occam's paradox that "hatred of God, theft and adultery might be not merely not wicked, but even meritorious were the will of God to command them."

From such ideas of Occam Luther advanced to the following: "The will of God decides whether I am pleasing to Him or not."[1]

This explains the proposition which frequently appears, in the Commentary on Romans and elsewhere, that man is at the same time righteous and a sinner, that the righteous man has the left foot still in sin and the right in grace.[2]

In the Commentary he attacks self-complacency in the performance of good works with the cry: "Good works are not something that can please because they are good or meritorious, but because they have been chosen by God from eternity as pleasing to Himself," words which presuppose that only the imputation matters. "Therefore," he continues, "works do not render us good, but our goodness, or rather the goodness of God, makes us good and our works good; for in themselves they would not be good, and they are or are not good in so far as God accounts them, or does not account them good ('*quantum ille reputat vel non reputat*'). Our own accounting or not accounting does not matter in the least. Whoever keeps this before him is always filled with fear, and waits with apprehension to see how God's sentence will fall out. This puts an end to all that puffing up of self and quarrelling, so beloved of the proud '*iustitiarii*,' who are so sure of their good works."

"Even the very definition of virtue which Aristotle gives," he concludes, "is all wrong, as though, forsooth, virtue made us perfect and its work rendered us worthy of praise. The truth is simply that it makes us praiseworthy in our own eyes and commends our works to us; but this is abominable in God's sight, while the contrary is pleasing to Him."[3]

As a matter of fact, Scholasticism, basing its teaching on Aristotle, considered virtue and vice as something real and objective, as qualities of the soul which adhere to it inwardly and "inform" it, i.e. impart to it a spiritual form and become part of it in the same way as material things have their special

acceptation by God without forgiveness; we, on the contrary, know that the evil in all works is forgiven through Christ, our righteousness, Who makes good all our defects; just as the saints have so-called merits only in Christ, for Whose sake God accepts graciously their works which He would not otherwise accept." "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 370. Cp. W. Braun, "Die Concupiscenz," etc., p. 213, where he rightly draws attention to the fact that A. Jundt, "Le développement de la pensée religieuse de Luther jusqu'en 1517," Paris, 1906, has not drawn his "information regarding Scholasticism from the right source, but from Harnack's and Seeberg's works, and even from Denifle's quotations." Cp. "Hist. Jahrbuch," 27, 1906, p. 884: "Jundt knows nothing of the Catholic literature on the matter," etc.

[1] Braun, pp. 191, 211; "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 42; 2, p. 536.

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 221.

[3] *Ibid.*

qualities, for instance, their natural colour without which they do not exist. These, as a matter of fact, were merely learned ways of expressing the fundamental truth naturally perceived by all, viz. that evil deeds and vices render a man evil, and good deeds and virtues render him good ; no sane mind could conceive of a theory of imputation by which good is made evil or evil good.

Luther was naturally obliged by his new theology of imputation to declare war on the older theological view of the existence of virtue and vice in the soul.[1] It was in so doing that, in his excitement, he uttered the curses above referred to (p. 209). It was no mere question of words, but of the very foundation of his new theology, a fact which makes his excitement comprehensible.

As a matter of fact, by his application of the theory of imputation he was heading for a " transformation of all values " and drifting towards the admission of a " future life of good and evil " long before modern philosophy had confidently opened up a similar perspective.

6. Preparation for Justification

Notwithstanding the fact that, according to the above exposition in the Commentary on Romans, man has absolutely no freedom of choice for doing what is good and that we cannot know with regard to our works how God will account them, Luther frequently speaks in the same book of the preparation necessary for obtaining justification, namely, by works. Here his feeling and his eloquence come into full play at the expense of clear theology. He does not even take into account the irresistibility of grace, which is the point he is bound to arrive at finally. Christ alone does the work, he says (" *soli Christo iustitia relinquitur, soli ipsi opera gratiæ et spiritus* ").[2] On the other hand, the bringing about of justification, at least so far as preparation goes, is imposed upon man. There are " works which predispose to justification," he teaches (" *opera quæ fiunt præparatorie ad iustificationem acquirendam* "). " Whoever by his works disposes himself for the grace of justification is already, to a certain extent, righteous ; for righteousness largely consists in the will to be righteous."[3]

[1] Cp. " Schol. Rom.," p. 183. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 89. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 90 f.

"Such works," he continues, "are good, because we do not trust in them, but by them prepare ourselves for justification by which alone we may hope for righteousness."[1] "Therefore we must pray earnestly, be zealous in good works and mortify ourselves ('*castigandum*') until readiness and joyousness develop in the will and its old inclination to sin is overcome by grace."

"For the grace [of justification] will not be given to man without this personal agriculture of himself" ("*non dabitur gratia sine ista agricultura sui ipsius*").[2]

We must continue to "look upon such works as merely preparatory, just as all works of righteousness performed in grace, prepare in their turn for an increase of justification, according to Apoc. xxii. 11."[3] "Only so can we be saved, namely, by repenting that we are laden with sin and are living in sin, and by imploring of God our deliverance.[4] He also, in other passages, emphasises the fact that works are necessary for justification as its preparation: "We must do works in order to obtain justification ('*opera pro iustificatione quærenda*'), works of grace and faith; they confirm the desire for justification and the fulfilment of the law, but we may not think that we are justified by them." "Rather, true believers spend their whole life in seeking justification . . . whoever seeks it with the heart and by works, is without doubt already justified in God's sight."[5] Towards the end of the Commentary he describes in emphatic words, which will be quoted below, the humility and sighing which should bring about justification.

We need not here specify how far the demand for individual effort is here a reminiscence of his Catholic training, or more particularly due to the school of Occam. It is an undoubted fact that Occamism and pseudo-mysticism are here rubbing shoulders, and that Luther himself is aware of the incongruity.[6]

7. Appropriation of the righteousness of Christ by humility—Neither "Faith only" nor assurance of Salvation

Luther's words, quoted above, where he says that Christ fulfilled the law for us, He made His righteousness ours and our sins His (see above, p. 95 f.), show that he applied in the fullest manner the theory of imputation to justification. Man remains a sinner, but the sin is not imputed to him, he is accounted righteous by the imputing to him of what is quite alien to him, viz. the righteousness of Christ. Thus

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 91. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 93. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 96. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 100 f.
[6] Cp. what he says in "Schol. Rom.," p. 85, about the "*opera iusta, bona, sancta extra vel ante iustificationem.*" On p. 84 he says, our good deeds should be directed towards the end "*ut mereamur iustificari ex ipso* (*Deo*)." In the interpretation of chapter ii. he explains verse 14: "*Quicumque legem implet est in Christo et datur ei gratia per sui præparationem ad eandem, quantum in se est,*" p. 38.

he is at one and the same time the friend and the enemy of God.[1]

The verb "to justify" as used in Holy Scripture the author of the Commentary on Romans simply takes to mean "to account as righteous," or "to declare righteous." Thus he says: "The doers of the law (according to Rom. ii. 13) are justified, i.e. they are accounted righteous. In Psalm cxlii. we read: 'In Thy sight no man living shall be justified,' i.e. be accounted righteous. . . . The Pharisee in the Temple wished to 'justify himself' (Luke x. 29), i.e. to declare his justification."[2]

"Whoever seeks peace in his righteousness, seeks it in the flesh." "Christ only is righteousness and truth, and in Him all is given us in order that by Him we may be righteous and true and escape eternal damnation."[3] "This justification takes place (according to Paul) outside of works of the law, i.e. without works which are outside of faith and grace, that is, which come from the law, which forces by fear and attracts by temporal promises. The Apostle calls those only works of faith which proceed from the spirit of freedom through the love of God, and these can only be done by the man who is justified by faith. The works of the law however do not help towards justification, but are rather a hindrance because they prevent a man from looking upon himself as unrighteous and in need of justification."[4]

"Christ, according to the Apostle, has become our righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30), i.e. all the good that we possess is exterior, it is Christ's. It is only in us by faith and hope in Him." "Our fulness and our righteousness is outside of us, within we are empty and poor. . . . The pious know that sin alone dwells in them, but that this is covered over and not imputed on account of Christ. . . . The beauty of Christ conceals our hideousness."[5]

"There is in this system," says Denifle, in his description of it, "no question of the expulsion of sin. The sinner . . . casts himself in his sinful condition on Christ without any means of his own, he hides himself under the wings of the hen and comforts himself with the idea: Christ has done everything in place of me, all my works would be merely sin . . . Luther did not perceive what a grievous wrong he was doing to God by this theory. It entirely suppresses the inward grace of God which raises a man up again, penetrates to the depths of his soul and purifies and fills it with supernatural strength. The organic process of justification thus shrinks into a purely mechanical shifting of the scenery." To this Denifle opposes the statement of Holy Scripture: "That man by a living faith is implanted in Christ as the sapling is grafted on to the olive tree, or the branch on the vine, so that there must be an interior change, an ennobling, and thus a new life."[6]

Luther says, "we are outwardly righteous because we are

[1] Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 608.
[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 41.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 83 f.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 114 f.
[6] Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 465.

justified, not by our works, but only by the reputation of God; but His reputation is not inwardly within us, and is not within our power." "*Solum Deo reputante sumus iusti, ergo non nobis viventibus vel operantibus; quare intrinsece et ex nobis impii semper.*"[1]

The connection between "reputation" as above and Occam's theory of acceptation is unmistakable.

The nominalistic views of God and of His arbitrary acceptation were the form in which Luther's ideas were moulded. The general structure of his thoughts was derived from what he had retained of the Nominalism of Occam.[2] On the principal point, however, Luther diverges from the theology of the school of Occam by not admitting in any way the saving grace which the latter teaches. There is with him no such thing as an infused virtue of righteousness.[3] Luther in his doctrine on virtue and vice had already suppressed them as "qualities," i.e. as objective realities; still more so does he deny that the grace which makes us righteous is in any sense a real "*qualitas*," or "*habitus*"; in fact, he leaves no actual justifying grace whatever actually inherent in man, but merely sees in God a gracious willingness not to regard us as sinners, and to lend us His all-powerful assistance for the struggle against sin (concupiscence and actual sin).

Thus the outlines of the strongest assertions which he makes later as to the imputing of the righteousness of Christ are already apparent in his interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans. Christ alone has assumed the place of what the Catholic calls saving grace. He already teaches what he was to sum up later in the short formula: "Christ Himself is my quality and my formal righteousness," or, again, what he was to say to Melanchthon in 1536: "Born of God and at the same time a sinner; this is a contradiction; but in the things of God we must not hearken to reason."[4] His Commentary on Romans prepares us for his later assertions: "The gospel is a teaching having no

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 104 f.

[2] J. Ficker in the preface to Luther's Commentary on Romans, p. lxxi.

[3] For the explanation of certain expressions of Luther's in this Commentary, e.g. that "God infuses grace," and that faith without works does not justify, see Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 466.

[4] "Tischreden," ed. Förstemann, 2, p. 148: "*Pugnat esse ex Deo natum et simul esse peccatorem.*" Cp. Weim. ed. 2, p. 420.

connection whatever with reason, whereas the teaching of the law can be understood by reason . . . reason cannot grasp an extraneous righteousness and, even in the saints, this belief is not sufficiently strong."[1] "The enduring sin is admitted by God as non-existent; one and the same act may be accepted before God and not accepted, be good and not good." "Whoever terms this mere cavilling ('*cavillatio*") is desirous of measuring the Divine by purblind human reason and understands nothing of Holy Scripture."[2]

How then are we to obtain from God the imputation of the righteousness of Christ? There is surely some condition to be supplied by man which may allow it to be conferred, for it cannot rule blindly and unconsciously. Or are we never certain of this imputation? Luther's answer is very pessimistic: Man never knows that it has been bestowed upon him. He can only hope, by sinking himself in his own nothingness ("*humilitas*"), to placate God and obtain this imputation.

Thus the author of the Commentary on Romans is still very far from that absolute assurance of salvation by faith which he was subsequently to advocate.[3]

He insists so much on the uncertainty of salvation that he blames Catholic theologians severely for the assurance and

[1] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 23, p. 160. By "saints," Luther means the pious folk who follow his teaching.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 420 (in the year 1519).

[3] Cp., for the absence of assurance of salvation, "Schol. Rom.," p. 104: "*Ex sola Dei reputatione iusti sumus; reputatio enim eius non in nobis nec in potestate nostra est. Ergo nec iustitia nostra in nobis est nec in potestate nostra,*" and, p. 105: "*Peccatores (sumus) in re, iusti autem in spe*"; p. 108: "*Sanus perfecte est in spe, in re autem peccator*"; p. 89: "*Nunquam scire possumus, an iustificati simus, an credamus; idcirco tanquam opera nostra sint opera legis estimemus et humiliter peccatores simus in sola misericordia eius iustificari cupientes. . . . In ipsum (Christum) credere incertum est*"; only by this road of the sense of sin is it possible to attain to the "grace of justification and pardon for a possible secret and unconscious unbelief"; he "*qui se credere putat et omnem fidem possidere perfecte*" has no part in this. The pious always think with regard to their good works: "*Quis scit, si gratia Dei hæc mecum faciat? Quis det mihi scire, quod bona intentio mea ex Deo sit? Quomodo scio, quod id quod feci, meum, seu quod in me est, Deo placeat?*" (p. 323). (Cp. the celebrated question: How can I find a gracious God?) "Away therefore," he says, "with the proud self-righteous who think themselves sure of their works!" (p. 221). Fear, humility, despair is according to him the only fitting state in which to appear before God: "Him who despairs of himself, the Lord accepts" (p. 223)—that is to say, if He has not destined him for hell!

confidence which their teaching induces in man, and refuses to admit any of the customary signs which moralists and ascetics look upon as conclusive testimony of a soul being in a state of grace.

The advantage he perceives in his new ideas is precisely that they keep man ever in a state of fear ("*semper pavidus*").[1] That, as Luther expressly says, "we can never know whether we are justified and whether we believe, is owing to the fact that it is hidden from us whether we live in every word of God."[2] When dealing with a passage, which he makes use of later in quite a different sense (Rom. iii. 22, "the justice of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all"), he says: "We must fear and tremble ('*timent et pavent*') lest we please not God; we must be in fear and despair ('*pavor et desperatio*'), for such is God's own work in us; if this fear does not take the place of the customary signs, then there is no hope possible; and, in so far, fear alone is a good sign."[3] "Our life is in death [here speaks the mystic], our salvation in destruction, our kingdom in banishment, our heaven in hell."[4] "Away with all trust in righteousness." Arise and "destroy all presumption in wholesome despair."

On this road of painful despair Luther fancies he discovers the only really "good sign" of salvation, so far as any sign at all can be said to exist: "On account of the confession of their sins God accounts the saints as righteous."[5]

"Whoever renounces everything, even himself, is ready to become nothing (*volens it in nihilum*), to go to death and to damnation, whoever voluntarily confesses and is persuaded that he deserves nothing good, such a one has done enough in God's sight and is righteous. We must, believing in the word of the cross, die to ourselves and to everything; then we shall live for God alone." "The saints have their sins ever before them, they beg for righteousness through the mercy of God and, for that very reason, they are always accounted righteous by God; in truth they are sinners, though righteous by imputation; unconsciously righteous and consciously unrighteous, sinners in deed but righteous in hope." "God's anger is great and wonderful; He accounts them at the same time righteous and unrighteous, removing sin and not removing it."[6] Here he exclaims pathetically: "God is wonderful in His saints (Ps. lxvii. 36), who are at the same time righteous and unrighteous." Of the "self-righteous" he immediately adds ironically: Wonderful is God in the hypocrites, "who are at the same time unrighteous and righteous!" Without any suspicion of paradox, he concludes:

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 221; see above, p. 211, note 4.

[2] From passage cited above, p. 114, n. 1.

[3] "Schol. Rom.," 214. Cp. his explanation of the 4th Heidelberg Thesis, that in a Christian "*desperatio*" ("*mortificatio*") and "*vivificatio*" are united; also Theses 18 and 24, that "*conteri lege*" is for everyone a necessity of the spiritual life. "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 356 f., 361, 364.

[4] "Schol. Rom.," p. 219.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

"It is certain that God's elect will be saved, but no one is certain that he is chosen."

Luther repeatedly represents the feeling of despair (under the name of "*humilitas*") as not merely a means of recognising the imputation of God and therewith one's salvation, but even as in itself the only means which can lead to salvation. He praises "humility" in mystical language as something man must struggle to attain and as the ideal of the devout. It occupies almost the same place in his mind as the "*sola fides*" at a later date.

That "humility" is to him the actual factor which obtains the imputation of the merits of Christ and thus makes the soul righteous and wins for it eternal salvation, is apparent not only from the above, but also from the following utterances: "When we are convinced that we are unrighteous and without the fear of God, when, thus humbled, we acknowledge ourselves to be godless and foolish, then we deserve to be justified by Him."[1] The fear of God works humility, but humility makes us fit for all [salvation]; we must merely resign ourselves to the admission that "there is nothing so righteous that it is not unrighteous, nothing so true that it is not a lie, nothing so pure that it is not filthy and profane before God."[2] "Let us be sinners in humility and only desire to be justified by the mercy of God." He alone who acknowledges his entire unrighteousness, who fears and beseeches, he alone, "as an abiding sinner," opens for himself the door to salvation.[3]

We must believe everything that is of Christ, he says, and only he does this who humbly bewails his own utter unrighteousness.[4] The mystic star of "humility" which has arisen to him he even describes as the "*vera fides*," and makes the following inference: "As this is so, we must humble ourselves beyond bounds." "When we have humbled ourselves wholly before God, then we have fulfilled righteousness, wholly and entirely ('*totam perfectamque iustitiam*'); for what else does all Scripture teach but humility?"[5]

Luther ascribes to "humility" all that he later ascribes to faith; "all Scripture," which now teaches humility, will later teach that faith is the only power which saves. In that very Epistle to the Romans, which at a later date was to be the bulwark of his "*sola fides*," he can as yet, in 1515 and 1516, find only "*sola humilitas*." His frequent exhortations to self-annihilation and despair of one's own efforts, exhortations taking the form of fulsome praise of one particular kind of humility, must be traced back to mystical influence and to his irritation against the "proud self-righteous."

It is true that Luther had, from the very beginning of his exposition, as the editor of the Commentary justly points out, "taken his stand against the scholastic [rather

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 84. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 83. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 89.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 86 f. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 39. Cp. "Ev. Kirchenztng.," 1911, 32, 506.

the Church's] doctrine of salvation; it is apparent at the very outset of the lectures that the separation has already taken place." It could not be otherwise, as at the commencement of the Commentary he already denies the power of man to do what is good. Ficker also says with truth: "Luther again and again comes back to his oldest and deepest torment, viz. the struggle against free will and man's individual powers";[1] his study of St. Paul confirms his views, which now take clearer shape, until finally "he incontinently identifies his opponents with the Pelagians."[2]

With regard to Luther's tenets on faith in the matter of salvation he has so far not departed in any essential from the accepted olden doctrine that faith is the commencement, root and foundation of salvation.

The editor of the Commentary also admits, though with limitations, the very remarkable fact that faith does not yet occupy in the Commentary on Romans the position which Luther assigns to it later: "the '*fides*,' which Luther explains with the help of a number of terms borrowed from his lectures on the Psalms, in the exposition of the Pauline Epistle does not as yet appear in its entire fulness and depth, as the expression of the relation of man to the eternal, at least not to the same extent as it does later; frequently we have a mere reproduction of the Pauline phraseology; there is no lack of reminiscences of Augustine, and the results of an Occamist training are also apparent."[3]

We certainly cannot say that at the very beginning of the Commentary,[4] faith or even "*sola fides*" is conceded the high place which it is afterwards to occupy in his system; the expression "*sola fides*" occurs there by pure accident and does not bear its later meaning; it is only intended to elucidate a sentence which in itself is correct: "*iustitia Dei est causa salutis.*" By this is meant that "*fides evangelii*" to which, as Luther says, Augustine ascribes justification, but which the latter, according to Luther's own admission, did not intend to take in the sense of the later Lutheran "*sola fides.*" Above all, as already pointed out, faith, in the Commentary on Romans, lacks its chief characteristic and does not of itself alone produce an absolute assurance of the state of grace. It was only in 1518 that Luther arrived at his peculiar belief in justification by virtue of a confident faith in Christ (assurance of salvation).[5]

In the Commentary on Romans Luther understands by faith, first the general submission of the mind to Divine revelation, a

[1] Ficker refers to "Schol. Rom.," p. 23 ff., p. 108 ff., 111 *seq.*, 114 167, 185, 187, 199, 244, 283, 287, 322 f.

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 322.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. lxxvi.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[5] See below, chapter x.

faith which he here, as also later, in agreement with the Church's teaching, accounts as the first preliminary for the state of grace. His opposition to works and self-righteousness frequently urges him to praise the high value of the faith which comes from God, whilst his mysticism likewise makes him accentuate the importance of trust and blind submission. "*Credite, confidite*" he cries in his exposition of the Psalms—of which the standpoint is still entirely that of the Church—also fervently recommending to his hearers the "*fiducia gratiæ Dei.*"[1] All that can be complained of is that there, as in the Commentary on the Psalms, he seizes every occasion to speak in favour of the advantages which faith possesses over works.

With regard to his teaching on faith in the Commentary on Romans, Denifle complains of "Luther's want of clearness in respect of justifying faith," of his exaggerations and indistinctness, of "his absolute ignorance of wholesome theology."[2] "The medium in this doctrine of justification," he says, "is really not faith at all, but the confession that we are always under the works of the law, always unrighteous, always sinners"; "he never, even later, arrived at a correct or uniform idea of faith. . . . Luther's assertion of the bondage of the will (complete passivity) renders faith in the process of justification, a mere monstrosity."[3]

Here we are not as yet concerned with the qualities of faith in the Lutheran process of justification, but it must be pointed out, that the acceptance of complete passivity in justification is a necessary corollary of the above ideas of "*humilitas.*" "Whereas the Christian," Denifle says, following the Catholic teaching, "moved and inspired by the grace of God repents of his sins, and, with a trusting faith, turns to God and implores their pardon, Luther excludes from justification all acts whether inward or outward on the part of the sinner; for God could not come into our possession or be attained to without the suppression of everything that is positive. Our works must cease and we ourselves must remain passive in God's hands."[4] In the Commentary on Romans passivity in the work of justification is certainly insisted on. Luther does not take the trouble to reconcile this with the activity which man is to exert in steeping himself in humility in order, by his prayers and supplications, to gain salvation.[5] He says of passivity: "God cannot be possessed or touched except by the negation of everything that is in us."[6] "Then only are we

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 651; 4, p. 228.

[2] Denifle, 1^1, p. 444.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 605 ff., with his testimonies.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 599.

[5] Cp. above, p. 218, and "Schol. Rom.," p. 105 ff.: "(*sancti*) *iustitiam a Deo secundum misericordiam ipsius implorant, eo ipso semper quoque iusti a Deo reputantur.*"

[6] "Schol. Rom.," p. 219. This remarkable passage, which is a proof of his pseudo-mysticism, runs: "*Omnis nostra affirmatio boni cuiuscunque sub negatione eiusdem* [*abscondita est*] *ut fides locum habeat in Deo, qui est negativa essentia* [!] *et bonitas et sapientia et iustitia nec potest possideri aut attingi nisi negatis omnibus affirmativis nostris.*"

capable of receiving God's works and plans, when our planning and our works cease; when we are altogether passive with regard to God interiorly as well as exteriorly."[1] In the Commentary on Galatians, not long after, he calls Christian righteousness a "passive righteousness," because we "there do nothing, and give God nothing."[2]

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 206 Cp. Denifle, 1^1, p. 600.

[2] In Gal., 1, p. 14. We can understand that Protestant theologians should wish to find in Luther's Commentary on Romans the foundation of the later so-called "Reformed Confession." O. Scheel, the first among them to treat in a detailed manner of the Commentary edited by Ficker ("Die Entwicklung Luthers" ["Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgesch., No. 100"], p. 174 ff.), has brought together a number of passages from this work concerning the doctrine of justification, which do not quite agree with the purely outward character of justification according to Luther, dwelt upon above, and which appear to presuppose an inward renewal. In the Commentary assertions are not wanting which contradict the ideas we have pointed out as running through the work; this is due to the fact that the author repeatedly reverts either to true Catholic views or to nominalistic ideas. It is not surprising that contradictions should occur very frequently at the commencement of his career, and that they also do so at a later period is undeniable. (Cp. O. Scheel's samples of Luther's Bible-teaching in our volume iv., xxviii., 1 and 2.)

Scheel himself says with reference to the doctrine of justification in the Commentary: "Luther was unable to give to his new conception of Christianity any thorough dogmatic sequence (p. 182); "these statements (on Rom. iii.) are devoid of doctrinal clearness" (p. 183). According to him it cannot be said "that Luther has arrived at any clear presentment of his reforming ideas in his Commentary on Romans" (p. 186). In the teaching of the Commentary *re* Concupiscence Scheel claims, it is true, to find "that deeply religious and moral conception of a reformed Christianity which is peculiar to Luther" (p. 188), but, nevertheless, remarks that Luther has not found "a quite uniform definition" for "the meaning which he connects with Concupiscence. Even the suppression of the guilt and the non-imputing of original sin might, in view of Luther's new religious and voluntarist views, be regarded as insufficient; for insufficient importance attributed to the connection between sin and guilt leads finally to an impersonal estimate of sin" (pp. 188, 189). He stopped short at a definition "in which we miss the severely voluntarist connection between sin and guilt" (p. 190). The author therefore speaks of Luther's view of sin as "insufficient" (p. 191).

With regard to grace, he continues: "Luther's statements as to grace are also not altogether without ambiguity" (*ibid.*), "he employs the customary designations for the action of grace, without reflecting that they do not correspond with his ethical and psychological views of grace" (p. 192). "Man's passivity in the process of salvation which he vindicates, and which, according to the Reformed Confession, was surely to be taken religiously, being only intended to deny the existence of any claim to merit, he defends so ponderously that all the psychological spontaneity of his voluntarism disappears and Quietist mysticism has to supply him with the colours necessary for depicting the appropriation of grace" (*ibid.*).

Concerning the question of assurance of salvation in the Commentary on Romans, Scheel, indeed, admits that "Luther had not yet arrived

8. Subjectivism and Church Authority. Storm and Stress

Subjectivism plays an important part in the exposition of the Epistle to the Romans.

It makes itself felt not merely in Luther's treatment of the Doctors and the prevalent theological opinions, but also in his ideas concerning the Church and her authority. We cannot fail to see that the Church is beginning to take the second place in his mind. Notwithstanding the numerous long-decided controversial questions raised in the Commentary, there is hardly any mention of the teaching office of the Church, and the reader is not made aware that with regard to these questions there existed in the Church a fixed body of faith, established either by actual definition or by generally accepted theological opinion. The doctrine of absolute predestination to hell, for instance, had long before been authoritatively repudiated in the decisions against Gottschalk, but is nevertheless treated by Luther as an open question, or rather as though it had been decided in the affirmative, thus making of God a cruel avenger of involuntary guilt.

The impetuous author, following his mistaken tendency to independence, disdains to be guided by the heritage of ecclesiastical and theological truth, as the Catholic professor is wont to be in his researches in theology and in his explanations of Holy Scripture. Luther, though by no means devoid of faith in the Church, and in the existence in her of the living Spirit of God, lacks that ecclesiastical feeling which inspired so many of his contemporaries in their speculations, both theological and philosophical; we need only recall his own professor, Johann Paltz, and Gabriel Biel to whom he owed so much. Impelled by his subjectivism, and careless

at any definite certainty of salvation" (p. 195), and that his statements are not "in touch with the saving faith of the Reformation" (*ibid.*); he finds, however, in the fear which Luther demands, "an element for overcoming the uncertainty with regard to salvation" (p. 198), indeed, he even thinks (p. 199) that "he had practically arrived at a certainty of salvation." So much may be admitted, that the incompleteness of the system contained in the Commentary led Luther at a later period to add to his numerous other errors, that of absolute certainty of salvation by "faith alone." With this our position is made clear with regard to Holl's article "Heilsgewissheit im Römerbriefkommentar," in the "Zeitschr. f. Theol. und Kirche," 20, 1910, p. 245 ff., where the doctrine of assurance is dated as far back as 1516 (p. 290).

of the teaching of preceding ages, he usually flies straight to his own "profounder theology" for new solutions. Here the habits engendered by the then customary debates in the schools exercise a detrimental effect on him. He is heedless of the fact that his hasty and bold assertions may undermine the foundations which form the learned support to the Church's dogmas. Important and assured truths become to him, according to this superficial method, mere "soap bubbles" which his breath can burst, "chimeras of fancy" which will melt away in the mist. This is the case, for instance, with the traditional doctrines of saving grace, of the distinction between original and actual sin, and of meritorious good works. Whoever does not agree with his terrible doctrine of predestination is simply reckoned among the subtle theologians, who are desirous of saving everything with their vain distinctions.[1] We cannot, of course, measure Luther by the standard of the Tridentine decrees, which embodied these and other questions in distinct formularies of which the Church in his time had not yet the advantage. Yet the principal points which Luther began to agitate at this time were, if not already actual dogmas, yet sufficiently expressed in the body of the Church's teaching and illuminated by ecclesiastical theology.

That he still adheres in the Commentary to the principle of the hierarchy is apparent from the fact that he declares its office to be sublime, and loudly bewails the fact that so many unworthy individuals had forced themselves at that time into its ranks; he says in his curious language: "It is horrifying and the greatest of all perils that there can be in this world or the next; it is simply the one biggest danger of all."[2] In the hierarchy, he says, God condescended to our weakness by choosing to speak to us and come to our assistance through the medium of men, and not directly, in His unapproachable and terrible majesty.[3]

He also recognises the various grades of the hierarchy, priestly

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 209 f.: "*Nostri theologi velut acutuli*," etc. "*Hæc tantum vacua verba sunt*," etc. "*Est ridicula additio si dicas*," etc. "*Torquent intelligentiam*," etc. Thus he arrives at his "*immutabilis prædestinatio*." "*Præcipit Deus ut irretiantur reprobi, ut ostendat iram suam*," with the pains of hell which they are absolutely powerless to escape (p. 213). See also above, p. 189 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6. Against the "*mercenarii*." In Ficker's text it reads: "*qualium hodie in ecclesia solus est numerus*." In place of "*solus*" read "*tantus*" or some other such word.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

and episcopal Orders. "The Church is a general hospital for healing those who are spiritually sick";[1] the rules which she gives to the clergy, the recital of the Divine Office for instance, must be obediently carried out.[2] She has a right to temporal possessions, only "at the present day almost all declare these to be spiritual things; they, the clergy, are masters in this 'spiritual' domain and are more careful about it than about their real spiritualities, or about their use of thunderbolts [excommunications] in the sentences pronounced by the Church."[3]

According to him, the prelates and the Church have a perfect right to condemn false teachers however much the latter may "utter their foolish cry of 'we have the truth, we believe, we hear, we call upon God.'" "Just as though they must be of God because they seem to themselves to be of God. No, we have an authority which has been implanted in the Church, and the Roman Church has this authority in her hands. Therefore the preachers of the Church, unless they fall into error, preach with assurance [on account of their commission]. But false teachers are pleased with their own words, because they are according to their own ideas. They appear to demand the greatest piety, but are themselves governed by their own opinion, and their self-will."[4] "Whoever declares that he is sent by God must either give proof of his mission by wonders and heavenly testimony, as the Apostles did, or he must be recognised and commissioned by an authority confirmed by Heaven. In the latter case, he must stand and teach in humble subjection to such authority, ever ready to submit to its judgment; he must speak what he is commissioned to speak and not what his own taste leads him to invent. . . . Anathema is the weapon," he exclaims—unconscious of his own future—"which lays low the heretics."[5]

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 111. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 290. Cp. p. 317.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 294 f. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 248 f.
[5] *Ibid.* Of the true preacher he says: "*Sub humili subiectione eiusdem auctoritatis prædicet, semper stare iudicio illius paratus ac, quæ mandata ei sunt, loqui, non quæ placita sunt sibi ac inventa.*" The punishment threatened by Zach. xiii. 3 against false prophets ("*configent eum*"), was to be applied to those who teach subversive doctrines on their own authority, being the anathema of their ecclesiastical superiors. "*Hoc est telum fortissimum, quo percutiuntur hæretici, quia sine testimonio Dei vel authoritas a Deo confirmatæ, sed proprio motu, specie pietatis erecti, prædicant, ut Ier.* xxiii. (v. 21): *Ipsi currebant et ego non mittebam eos. Et tamen audent dicere: Nos salvabimur . . . nos credimus . . . prædicamus. Sed hoc dicere non possunt: Nos prædicamus, quia missi sumus. Hic, hic iacent! Et hic est tota vis et salus, sine quo cetera falsa sunt, licet an falsa sint non cogitent.*" The Church preaches an authentic gospel, which, according to Romans i. 2, was introduced into the world with solemn sanction and according to prophecy. But the gospel of the heretic? "*Monstret, ubi sit ante promissum et a quo.*" Where is its attestation? "*Sed horum illi nihil solliciti stulte dicunt: Nos veritatem habemus. . . . Quasi hoc satis sit ex Deo esse, quia ipsis ita ex Deo videatur esse. . . . Sic ergo authoritas ecclesiæ instituta, ut nunc adhuc Romana tenet ecclesia.*" The heretics, it is true, assert that they are in possession of the really wholesome

Whenever he gets the chance he magnifies the corruption of the Church so much that his expressions might lead one to suppose that the saving institution founded by Christ was either completely decayed and fallen away or was at least on the road to forsaking its vocation as teacher and as the guardian of morals. His complaints may, it is true, be in part accounted for by the impetuosity which carries him away and by his rhetorical turn. He probably did not at that time really think that a healthy reformation from within was absolutely impossible. Still, had anyone attempted to carry out his immature and excessive demands for reform, they would hardly have achieved much in the way of a real regeneration. His ideas of a radical change were deeply ingrained in his mind; this we naturally gather from his bringing them forward so frequently and under such varied forms. In his mystical moods he sees the errors and abuses opposed to the "Word" swollen into a veritable "deluge"; his professorial chair is only just above the waves. Hence he will cry out as loudly as he can. In his voice we can, however, detect a false note, and his exaggerations and all his stormings do not avail to inspire us with confidence. He is too full of his own subjectivity, too impetuous and passionate to be a reformer, though his other gifts might have fitted him for the office. His very sensitiveness to neglect of duty in others, had it been purified and disciplined, aided by his eloquence, might have been able to inaugurate a movement of reform. In many of his sayings he comes nigh the position of a Catholic reformer, and even, at times, makes exaggerated demands on obedience and the need of feeling with the Church.[1]

We may add the following to the complaints above mentioned, as occurring in the Commentary on Romans with regard to the state of the Church.

teaching. "*Volunt autem summam pictatem, ut sibi videtur.*" But the decision does not rest here with man's own feelings; on the contrary, the Word of God frequently overthrows man's own opinion: "*non sinit stare sensum nostrum, etiam in iis quæ sunt* [i.e. *videntur*] *sanctissima, sed destruit ac eradicat ac dissipat omnia.*" How powerfully and thoughtfully is he able to handle an argument when he has right on his side! Could anyone condemn more strongly his own later attitude?

[1] How, for instance, he exaggerates in his mystical enthusiasm the principle of authority, see below, p. 252.

"The Pope and the chief pastors of the Church," so runs Luther's general and bitter charge, "have become corrupt and their works are deserving of malediction; they stand forth at the present day as seducers of the Christian people" ("*seducti et seducentes populum Christi a vera cultura Dei*").[1] He waxes eloquent not only against their too frequent granting of indulgences—from which in their avarice they derived worldly profit for the Church—but also against their luxurious lives which fill the whole world with the vices of Sodom, and others too; under their wicked stewardship the faithful throughout the Church have altogether forgotten what good works, faith and humility are, and make their eternal salvation depend upon external observances and foolish legends. Even those who have more insight and are better men, are all self-righteous and more like idolaters than Christians.

The Apostle Paul, he says, expounds in the Epistle to the Romans, the command of loving our neighbour (xii. 6 *seq.*), but is this followed by the Church? Instead of fulfilling it "we busy ourselves with trivialities, build churches, increase the possessions of the Church, heap money together, multiply the ornaments and vessels of silver and gold in the churches, erect organs and other pomps which please the eye. We make piety to consist in this. But where is the man who sets himself to carry out the Apostle's exhortations, not to speak of the great prevailing vices of pride, arrogance, avarice, immorality and ambition."[2] Not long after this outburst, speaking in a milder strain, he says: "We exalt ourselves so as to instruct the whole world, and hardly understand ourselves what we are teaching." "People without training or knowledge of the world, sent by their bishops and religious superiors, undertake to instruct men, but really only add to the number of chatterers and windbags."[3]

On another occasion he declares, people think bustle in the church, loud organ playing and pompous solemnities at Mass are all that is needed; for such things collections are made, whereas alms-giving for the relief of our neighbour is not accounted anything. Nothing is thought of swearing, lying or backbiting, even on Feast Days, but if anyone eats flesh-meat or eggs on a Friday, he gives great scandal, so unreasonable are all people nowadays ("*adeo nunc omnes desipiunt*"). What is needed to-day is to do away with the Fast Days and to abrogate many of the Festivals . . . the whole Christian Code ought to be purified and changed, and the solemnities, ceremonies, devotions and the adorning of the churches reduced. But all this is on the increase daily, so that faith and charity are stifled, and avarice, arrogance and worldliness grow apace. What is worse, the faithful hope to find in this their eternal salvation and do not trouble about the inner man.[4]

The lawyers, he says, speaking in a mystical vein, act quite wrongly when, as soon as they see that anyone has the law on his

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 243. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 275 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 278 [4] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

side, they encourage him to assert his rights ("*qui statim quod secundum iura iustum sciunt, prosequendum suadent*"). "On the contrary, every Christian should rejoice in suffering injustice, even in matters of the greatest moment ('*quoad maximas iustitias nostras*'). . . . But almost the whole world runs after the contrary error [i.e. sternly asserts its rights]. Cardinals, bishops, princes act like the Jews did to the King of Babylon (2 Kings xxiv. 20; xxv. 1 ff.); they cling to their petty privileges, lose sight of morality and so perish." Someone should have told Duke George (of Saxony) when he fought against the Duke of Frisia: "Your own and your people's deserts are not so great that you should not rather have patiently allowed yourself to be chastised by that rebel, who, though unrighteous, was the executor of God's righteous judgment. Calm yourself therefore and acknowledge the Will of God."[1]

He says something similar to his own bishop, Hieronymus Schulz (Scultetus) of Brandenburg,[2] and to another bishop, probably Wilhelm von Honstein, Bishop of Strasburg. The latter had put in force the ecclesiastical statutes against the infringers of the sanctity of the church. Luther says: "Why trouble a town with this wretched matter? It is merely a question of human regulations; but if the bishop desired to enforce God's laws, he would not need to leave his own house; he is not indeed acting wrongly, but he is swallowing a camel and straining at gnats (Matt. xxiii. 24). . . . But the bishops thirst for vengeance, they brand the criminals and themselves deserve to be worse branded. Would to God that the time may come when rights and privileges and all who worship them are consigned to perdition! Ambition and unbelief should not be allowed to triumph over those condemned for transgressing the statutes."[3]

"I say this with pain, but I am obliged to because I have an Apostolic commission to teach. My duty is to point out to all the wrong they are committing, even to those in high places."[4]

In accordance with this, the young Professor loudly blames Pope Julius II. In his quarrel with the Republic of Venice "this advice should have been given him: 'Holy Father, Venice is doing you a wrong, but the Roman Church deserves it on account of her faults, yea, she deserves even worse. Therefore do nothing, such is the Will of God.' But the Pope replied: 'No, no, let us vindicate our rights by force.'"[5] "He chastised them [the Venetians] with great bloodshed because they had sinned grievously and seized upon the possessions of the Church; he brought them back to the Church and so gained great merit. But the horrible corruption of the Papal Curia and the mountain of the most terrible immorality, pomp, avarice, ambition and sacrilege is accounted no sin."[6]

On another occasion, after a no less forcible outburst against Rome, he demands the abolition of "false piety": This so-called

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 271 f. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 272. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 300 f.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 301. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 272. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 301 f.

piety must no longer be permitted, as though it were merely a weakness; but in Rome they do not trouble about doing away with it, there is there nothing but the freedom of the flesh; "almost all are wanting in charity." "I fear that in these days we are all on the road to utter destruction."[1]

We must listen, he says—alluding to the formalism which he thinks is apparent everywhere—to the "inward word," which often speaks to us quite differently from the injunctions to which we are accustomed. "The wisdom of fools always looks more to the work than to the word; it thinks itself able to gauge the meaning and value of the word from the value or worthlessness of the deeds"; what we should do is the contrary; the precious, inestimable word must always resound in our hearts and direct all our outward actions.[2] The "spirit of the believer is subject to no one," "the spirit is free as regards all things"; "all exterior things are free to those who are in the spirit." "The bondage [of charity] is the highest liberty." [3]

Such words form a quite obvious preliminary to the "Evangelical freedom" which he was afterwards to vindicate. He thus gives a much wider application to the ideas he had met with in Tauler than was in the mind of that pious mystic. Tauler writes: "I tell you that you must not submit your inner man to anyone, but to God only. But your exterior man you must submit in a true and real humility to God and to all creatures."[4] Luther says what on the surface seems quite similar: the Christian is free and master of all things and is subject to no one (by faith), and yet at the same time a willing servant of all and

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 320. It cannot be proved that such gloomy forebodings were due to the influence of the apocalyptic literature then so widely disseminated in print. (See Ficker, p. xcix.) The verdict which he passes on the Church of that day is, however, as severe and comprehensive as "the sharpest criticisms of the Reformed theology, or of the apocalyptic literature" (*ibid.*, p. xcvii.); the verdict is really a consequence of his "new conception of a personal religion" (p. xci.). On the strength of this Ficker thinks he may go so far as to say: "Just as, hitherto, he had confronted the teaching authorities with the Scripture rightly understood and opened up the religion of the gospel to the individual, bringing it home to each one as a moral force, so now under the pressure of the Scripture and of outward events, he sets up the new standard of Christian life . . . thus realising in practice the religion he had discovered" (pp. xci., xcvi.).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 298, 302, 303.

[4] Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 285.

subject to all (by charity).[1] Yet, both in the Commentary on Romans and in the works which were soon to follow, "the willing servant" is more and more ousted by false ideas of independence, so that a danger arises of only the "free master of all things" remaining. In the Commentary on Romans all exterior submission to the Church is, in principle, menaced by a liberty which, appealing to the inward experience of the Word and a deeper conception of religion, seeks to overstep all barriers.

The confused ideas for which he was beholden to his pseudo-mysticism were in great part the cause of this and of other errors.

9. The Mystic in the Commentary on Romans

Since the appearance in print of Luther's Commentary on Romans it has been possible to perceive more clearly the ominous power which false mysticism had gained over the young author.

His misapprehension of some of the principal elements of Tauler's sermons and of the "Theologia Deutsch" stands out in sharp relief in these lectures on the Pauline Epistle, and we see more plainly how the obscure ideas he finds in the mystics at once amalgamate with his own. The connection between the pseudo-mysticism which he has built up on the basis of true mysticism, and the method of theology which he is already pursuing, appears here so great, and he follows so closely the rather elastic figures and thoughts provided by the mystical science of the soul, that we are almost tempted, after reading his exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, to ask whether all his intellectual mistakes were not an outcome of his mysticism. The fact is, however, that he began his study of mysticism only after having commenced formulating the principles of his new world of thought. It was only after the ferment had gone on working for a considerable time that he chanced upon certain mystic works. Yet, strange to say, the mysticism with which he then became acquainted was not that German variety which had already been infected with the errors of Master Eckhart, but the sounder mysticism which had avoided the pitfalls. It is a tragic coincidence that mysti-

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 7, p. 49. *De libertate christiana.*

cism, the most delicate blossom of the theology of the Middle Ages and of true Catholicism, should have served to confirm him in so many errors. True mysticism has in all ages been a protest against all moral cowardice and inertia, against tepidity and self-complacent mediocrity; false mysticism, on the other hand, debases itself to Quietism and even to Antinomianism; the world has lived to see pseudo-mysticism deny evil the better to permit it.[1] Even true mysticism is constantly open to the danger not only of conscious and intentional exaggeration of its theses, but of unintentional misapprehension.

Misapprehension is a misfortune to which mysticism was ever exposed, owing mainly to the inadequacy of human language to express the mystic's thoughts,[2] whereas Scholasticism, thanks to its clear-cut terminology, has been spared such a fate, and for the same reason has never been in favour with confused and cloudy minds. Tauler had originally been trained in the Scholasticism of St. Thomas of Aquin, and in the teaching of the Frankfort author of the "Theologia Deutsch" the true principles of the old school still shine out. This, however, did not save these writers from having formerly been considered, by Protestants, precursors of Luther's doctrines. Denifle, by his studies on these and the later mystics, threw such valuable light on the subject that the Protestant theologian Wilhelm Braun, in the work he recently devoted to tracing the development of Luther, says: "it is wrong for Protestants to claim mysticism as a pre-Reformation reforming movement; this Denifle has proved in his epoch-making researches."[3]

False Passivity

As regards the important new data furnished by the Commentary on Romans on Luther's mysticism, the editor himself admits in the preface that "the ideal of resignation [preached by the Catholic mystics] was raised by Luther to an unconditional passivity and to a real system of Quietism, which he completely identified with the theme of the Epistle to the Romans and with the piety of St. Augustine. In this he found the bond of union combining all his ex-

[1] Cp. J. Zahn, "Einfuhrung in die christl. Mystik," p. 102.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 271 ff.
[3] Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 301, n. 2

periences. Mysticism it is which lends its deep and fiery hue to his thoughts; where Luther is describing the most intimate processes and gives their highest expression to the thoughts which inspire him, it is mysticism which is speaking through him . . . the complete and unconditional surrender of man to God."[1]

Luther gives in a peculiar fashion his reasons for taking such a standpoint: "The Nature of God demands that He should first destroy and annihilate everything there is in us before He imparts His gifts. For it is written: 'The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, He bringeth down to hell and bringeth back again.' By this most gracious plan He renders us fit for the reception of His gifts and His works. We are then receptive to His works and plans when our own plans and our own works have ceased, and we become quite passive towards God ('*quando nostra consilia cessant et opera quiescunt et efficimur pure passivi respectu Dei*') both as regards exterior and interior activity. . . . Then the 'utterable sighs' commence, then 'the Spirit comes and helps our infirmity.'"[2] It is in the description of this "suffering and bearing of God" that he expressly quotes Tauler as the teacher of the higher form of prayer, adding: "Yes, yes, 'we know not how we should pray,' therefore the Spirit is necessary to assist us in our weakness." "As a woman remains passive in conception, so we must remain passive to the first grace and eternal salvation. For our soul is Christ's bride. Before grace, it is true, we pray and implore, but when grace comes and the soul is to be impregnated by the Spirit, then it must neither pray nor act, but only endure. To the soul this seems hard and it is downcast, for that the soul should be without act of the understanding and the will, that is much like sinking into darkness, destruction and annihilation ('*in perditionem et annihilationem*'); from this prospect she shrinks back in horror, but in so doing she often deprives herself of the most precious gifts of grace."[3]

It was just on this point that Luther most completely misapprehended Tauler. It is true that this mediæval mystic speaks strongly against any too great esteem of human activity, and that he also recommends the spiritual man, in certain circumstances, to "refuse all exterior works the better to devote himself with the necessary submission and in entire peace" to interior communication with his Maker and Highest Good, and, as he says, "to suffer God."[4] But he does not thereby recommend man to long after a state without thought or will, or after mere nothingness—in order to magnify God and His powers alone; according to Tauler, grace does not work in the soul "without the co-operation of the understanding and the will."

[1] P lxxxii. [2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 203.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 206.
[4] Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 281, 286.

The Quenching of the "Good Spark in the Soul"

Luther in the above recommendation to passivity falsely assumes that the soul is entirely corrupted by original sin and only offends God with its acts. This also appears clearly in the Commentary on Romans. Protestants themselves now admit that Luther deviated from the standpoint of the orthodox mystics, particularly from that of Tauler, and that "in the view of the mystics of the Middle Ages there is no doubt that the natural good in man outweighs the natural evil. The central point in which all the lines of mystic theology converge is this indestructible goodness." So speaks a Protestant theologian.[1]

In Gerson, the mystic whom Luther had studied in his early days at Erfurt, he must have met with the beautiful teaching, that the soul had received from God a natural tendency towards what is good, that this is "the virginal portion of the soul," which is the "source and seat of mystical theology."[2] Tauler is fond of treating of this "noble spark of fire in the soul," of "this interior nobility which lies hidden in the depths."[3] The Scholastics, too, unanimously teach this disposition to good which remains after original sin.

Luther, when opposing the good tendency, attacks only the Scholastics, not the mystics; he declares that all the errors on grace and nature which he has to withstand entered through the hole which the Scholastics made with their "syntheresis."[4] One thing is certain, viz. that he was wrong in foisting his view of the absolute corruption of the human race on the mystics; "he could not," the Protestant theologian above referred to admits, "quite truthfully invoke the support of the mystics for his assertions."[5] The doctrines which Tauler advances in the very context in which his blame of the self-righteous occurs, viz. that there is no righteousness without personal acts, that even the sinner can do what is good, that he, more especially, must prepare himself for the grace of justification, pass unheeded in Luther's exposition of the Epistle to the Romans. "Luther overlooked this series [of testimonies given by Tauler]; only the statements regarding the righteous by works made any impression on him; his polemics are directed against those who serve two masters, who wish to please God and the world and to do great things for God's sake; these are the people who are at heart satisfied with themselves."[6]

[1] Braun, p. 296. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 297. [3] *Ibid.*

[4] On the syntheresis, see above, p. 75. When Luther, on the strength of Romans ii., nevertheless, recognises "that natural religion exerts the force of conscience in the hearts of the heathen," he is contradicting himself without being aware of it. (Braun, p. 300.)

[5] Braun, p. 296. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

Tauler repeatedly uses the word "spirit" for man's native good tendency and activity. This expression Luther simply takes to mean the Divine Spirit, which must be infused into man on account of his natural helplessness. The theologian mentioned above here also admits: "Much that Tauler intended to refer to the human syntheresis, or the created spirit, Luther has ascribed to the uncreated Divine Spirit, who imparts grace and faith";[1] on the other hand we may allow with the same author that Luther was probably misled by the "hermaphrodism of Tauler's teaching, according to which the spirit longs for a metamorphosis"; Tauler's lively description of the supernatural being and life of the soul sometimes throws into the background the independence of its action in the natural sphere, though the outcome is not really an "hermaphrodite" in the strict sense of the word. It is also true that "Luther overlooked the other side, namely, the Divine immanence which all those mystics teach with equal distinctness,[2] or at least he did not make sufficient account of it.

Selfishness and the "Theology of the Cross"

Another important point on which Luther deviated from true mysticism has now been brought to light by the Commentary on Romans. According to the Strasburg mystic, and according to all good mystics generally, selfishness must be looked on as the greatest interior enemy of man. It is a leaven which readily infects the actions, even of the best, and therefore must be expelled by struggling against it and by prayer.

Selfishness, says the "Theologia Deutsch," "makes the creature turn away from the unchangeable good to that which is changeable." Even in the case of the devil, it tells us, the reason of his fall was "his I and my, his mine and me"; he fancied he was something, that something belonged to him and that he had a right to something.[3]

In the Commentary on Romans Luther also speaks in impressive words against selfishness and its malice.[4] He makes

[1] Braun, p. 301. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Cp. *ibid.*, pp. 287, 288.

[4] For instance, "Schol. Rom.," p. 136 ff.: "*Natura nostra vitio primi peccati tam profunda est in seipsam incurva, ut non solum optima dona Dei sibi inflectat . . . verum etiam hoc ipsum ignoret. . . . Hoc vitium propriissimo nomine Scriptura Aon, id est iniquitatem, pravitatem, curvitatem appellat. . . . Talis curvitas est necessario inimica crucis, cum crux mortificet omnia nostra, illa autem se et sua vivificet.*" Therefore it is necessary (and here he comes to his personal ideas against the self-righteous) to reach a point where, "*iustitia et sapientia omnis devoratur et absorbetur. . . . Charitas Dei extinguit fruitionem propriæ iustitiæ, quia non nisi solum et purum Deum diligit, non dona ipsa Dei, sicut hipocritæ iustitiarii.*" "What Luther says of pure love,"

use of every note at his command in order to warn us against this serpent. In these passages we might fancy we hear the voices of the mystic leaders of the faithful in the Middle Ages, even of a Bernard of Clairvaux. Nor is practical advice wanting; we are exhorted to earnest, humble prayer, to a watchful resistance—to be strengthened by practice—against the desires of self-love, even in small things, to mortify and to tame our flesh. We must go out of ourselves even in spiritual matters; everything, he says, depends in the spiritual life on self-abnegation: "God's righteousness fills those only who seek to empty themselves of their own righteousness, He fills the hungry and the thirsty . . . let us then tell God, so he says with all the enthusiasm his idea of grace gives him: "how glad are we to be empty, that Thou mayest be our fulness; how glad to be weak, that Thy strength may dwell within us; how glad to be sinners, that Thou mayest be justified in us; how glad to be fools, that Thou mayest be our wisdom; how glad to be unrighteous, that Thou mayest be our righteousness."[1] Suffering sent by God, so the author frequently repeats almost in Tauler's words, is to be accepted as a remedy against the disease of self-love not only with patience, but with joy. Pain, particularly inward pain, should be honoured like the cross of Christ ("*tribulatio velut crux Christi adoranda*");[2] we must bear it bravely like true children of God and not take to flight like the servant, or the hireling.[3]

In connection with selfishness Luther exposes his so-called "*theologia crucis*," which, with the adjuncts he gives it, is quite in keeping with his ideas. He was also to advocate the theology of the cross in his disputations, endeavouring to show that it alone teaches us how to make a right use of earthly things.

"He is not a Christian, but a Turk, and an enemy of Christ, who does not desire afflictions." "Our theologians and popes are in fact enemies of the cross of Christ . . . for no one hates pain and trouble more than the popes and the lawyers [i.e. those who insist upon laws and observances]. No one is more greedy than they for riches, comfort, idleness, honour and pomp." "They honour the relics of the Holy Cross and yet abhor and fly from what they dislike." "We consider Christ our helper

Denifle remarks (Denifle, 1[1], p. 484), "rests merely on his misconception of Tauler." He points out that, in his Commentary on Romans, owing to his false idea of self-love he went so far as to "explain the command 'love thy neighbour as thyself' in quite a different sense from that hitherto taught by the Church, for ourselves we may only hate. . . . According to him, this command means: hate thyself that thou mayest love thy neighbour alone." ("*Oblitus tui, solum proximum diligas.*")

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 59. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 133. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

and our support in time of trouble, but whoever does not suffer gladly, cheats Him of these titles ; to such a one God even is no longer the Creator because he will not return to the nothingness from which God created all. Whoever will not suffer God in weakness, foolishness and punishment, for him God is not powerful, not wise, not merciful."[1] "The cross puts to death everything that is in us. Nature, it is true, desires to make itself and everything alive, but God in His love takes care, by the infliction of crosses and suffering, that even spiritual gifts shall not taste too sweet to the righteous ; he must not throw himself upon them in a natural, godless impetuosity in order to enjoy them, even though they be attractive and tempt him to savour them . . . he may not even love God on account of His grace and His gifts, but only for His own sake, otherwise this would be a forbidden [!] indulgence in the grace received, and he would insult the Father even more than he did before [i.e. when as yet unrighteous !]. In the Commentary on Romans Luther refuses to recognise any love save that which springs from the most perfect motive. He stigmatises the love which arises from the joy in the benefits bestowed by a gracious God,—and which the orthodox mystics allowed,—as presumption, and as an enjoyment of the creature rather than of the Creator, and goes so far as to say that if a man were to remain in this love "he would be lost eternally."[2]

To these assertions we may add the following theses, defended under Luther's auspices in 1518, which explain the new "*theologia crucis*." "Whoever is not destroyed ('*destructus*') and brought back by the cross and suffering to the state of nothingness, attributes to himself works and wisdom, but not to his God, and so he abuses and dishonours the gifts of God. But whoever is annihilated by suffering ('*exinanitus*') ceases to do anything, knowing that God is working in him and doing all. Therefore, whether he himself does anything or not, he remains the same, and neither vaunts himself for doing something nor is ashamed of doing nothing, because God works in him. For himself, this he knows, it is enough that he should suffer and be destroyed by the cross, so that he may advance more and more towards annihilation. This is what Christ teaches in John iii. 3 : 'Ye must be born again.' If we are to be born again, we must first die and be raised with the Son of God [on the cross] ; I say die, i.e. taste death as though it were present."[3] "We may not fly from human wisdom and the law, but whoever is without the theology of the cross is making the worst use of the best things. The true theologian is not he who understands the 'invisible things of God by the things that are made,' but he who by suffering and the cross recognises in God the visible and the obscure."[4]

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 133 f. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 137. Cp. above, p. 234, n. 4 end.
[3] Heidelberg Disputation, on thesis 24. "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 363. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 401.
[4] *Ibid.*, theses 19, 20.

The Night of the Soul and Resignation to Hell

The better to fight against selfishness Tauler had proposed that everyone should look upon himself and his own works as evil, imitating a certain holy brother who used to say: "Know that I am the basest of sinners."[1] In this innocent recommendation nothing is implied of the complete corruption of nature, of a desire for hell, or of resignation to eternal separation from God. It was only as an exercise in humility and penitent love that Tauler and the other mystics wished the devout man to cultivate the habit of looking on himself as absolutely unworthy of heaven and as better fitted for a place in hell. He is urged to descend in spirit to the place of torment and acknowledge, against his egotism and arrogance, that, on account of his sins, he has deserved a place there among the damned, and not in the happy vicinity of God.

They also depict in gloomy, mystical colours the condition of the unhappy soul who, by the consent of God and in order to try it, sees itself deprived of all comfort, and, as it were, torn away from its highest good and relegated to hell. Such pains, they teach, are intended as a way of purgation for the soul, which, after such a night, can raise itself again with all the more confidence and love to God, who has, so far, preserved it from so great a misfortune.

The doctrine of the dark, mystical night appealed very strongly to Luther's mind. In his theology he is fond of picturing the soul as utterly sinful and deserving of hell, meaning by this something very different from what orthodox mystics taught. He also suffered greatly at times from inward commotion and darkening of the soul, due to fears regarding predestination, to a troubled conscience or to morbid depression, of which the cause was perhaps bodily rather than mental. These, however, bore no resemblance to the pains—"mystical exercises" as they have been called by Protestants—of which the mystics speak. In his "temptations in the monastery" he did not experience what Tauler and the "Theologia Deutsch" narrate of the consuming inner fire of Purgatory. Luther, however, erroneously applied their descriptions to his own

[1] Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 285.

condition.[1] Thus his idea of the night of the soul is quite different from that of the mystics, though he describes it in almost the same words, and, thanks to his imagination and eloquence, possibly in even more striking colours.

Several times in his Commentary on Romans he represents resignation to, indeed even an actual desire for, — damnation—should that be the will of God—as something grand and sublime. Thereby he thinks he is teaching the highest degree of resignation to God's inscrutable will; thereby the highest step on the ladder of self-abnegation has been attained. In reality it is an ideal of a frightful character, far worse even than a return to nothingness. He lets us see here, as he does so often in other matters, how greatly his turbulent spirit inclined to extremes.[2]

"If men willed what God wills," he writes, "even though He should will to damn and reject them, they would see no evil in that [in the predestination to hell which he teaches]; for, as they will what God wills, they have, owing to their resignation, the will of God in them." Does he mean by this that they should resign themselves to hating God for all eternity? Luther does not seem to notice that hatred of God is an essential part of the condition of those who are damned ("*damnari et reprobari ad infernum*"). Has he perhaps come to conceive of a hatred of God proceeding from love? He seems almost to credit those who think of hell, with a resolve to bear everything, even hatred of God, with loving submission to the will of Him Who by His predestination has willed it.

He even dares to say to those who are affrighted by predestination to hell, that resignation to eternal punishment is, for the truly wise, a source of "ineffable joy" ("*ineffabili iucunditate in ista materia delectantur*");[3] for the perfect this is "the best purgation from their own will," i.e. the way of the greatest bitterness, "because under charity the cross and suffering is always understood." But all, he says, even the half-imperfect,

[1] Cp. Luther's appeal to Tauler: "*De ista patientia Dei et sufferentia vide Taulerum*," etc. (see above, p. 232). Denifle, 1^1, p. 484, remarks: "The above statements are in part founded on Tauler, whom Luther misunderstood throughout. The two stood on different ground and had a different starting-point and a different goal."

[2] In allusion to such doctrines, Denifle speaks (Denifle, 1^1, p. 486) of "Luther's worse than morbid, yea, terrible theology." The passages in Tauler which have been alleged to show that his teaching was similar to that of Luther on this point, have quite a different sense. Tauler did not recognise the undeserved reprobation which Luther presupposes; he makes the horrible misfortune of eternal reprobation, which culminates in hatred of God, a result of voluntary separation from Him in this life.

[3] "Schol. Rom.," pp. 213, 223.

see that here we have a splendid remedy for destroying "the presumptuous building upon merit; let everyone rejoice in his fear and thank God,"[1] the more so that those who are so much afraid will certainly not go to hell; "as they make themselves entirely conformable to the will of God it is impossible that they should be delivered over to eternal punishment, as he who resigns himself entirely to God's holy Will cannot remain separated from Him."[2]

This doctrine of a wholesome fear of hell, of a saving, heroic abandonment to God, and of an exalted and pure love to be exercised by all as a "remedy" against damnation, invalidates Luther's doctrine of absolute and undeserved predestination to hell; salvation is again made to depend upon both God and man, whose co-operation becomes necessary; it is only because "man will not will what God wills" that he is damned. Yet, according to Luther, the saving fear and resignation is only possible to the elect, and these must in the end be in doubt as to whether they are pleasing to God, just as they must be uncertain regarding all their actions.

In confirmation of his theory of readiness for hell Luther even refers to St. Paul, who says in his Epistle to the Romans, that he had offered himself to the everlasting pains of hell for the salvation of the Jews; that, in order to save them, he had been ready to be "an anathema from Christ."[3] But the example does not apply. According to a more correct explanation, the Apostle, who was always in spiritual communion with Christ, speaks only of an outward separation.[4] Luther himself says in this connection: Paul did not desire to hate Christ, but was ready to be separated from Him; in this he displayed the "most sublime degree of charity, a truly apostolic love"; "this seems, of course, incomprehensible and foolish to those who think themselves holy and love God with the '*amor concupiscentiæ*,' i.e. on account of their salvation and for the sake of eternal rest, or in order to escape from hell, in other words, not for God's sake but their own. . . . What they really desire is salvation according to their own fancy, instead of desiring their own nothingness both here and hereafter ('*suum nihil optare*'), and only the will and glory of God," whereas "all perfect saints, out of their overflowing affection, are ready to accept everything, even hell itself. By reason of this readiness, it is true, they at once escape all punishment."

According to Luther, even Christ offered Himself for hell whole and entire. Luther does not make the slightest distinction in the agony in the Garden between mere exterior and real interior separation from God. Christ was ever united hypostatically with God, and His human nature never ceased to enjoy the vision of God. Luther, however, merely says: "He found Himself in a state of condemnation and abandonment which was

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 214. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 218. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 217 f.
[4] On the history of the explanation of this passage see Cornely, "Commentar. in Ep. ad Romanos," pp. 471–4.

greater than that of all the saints. His sufferings were not easy to Him, as some have imagined, because He actually and in truth offered Himself to the eternal Father to be consigned to eternal damnation for us ('*quod realiter et vere se in æternam damnationem obtulit Deo patri pro nobis*'). His human nature did not behave differently from that of a man who is to be condemned eternally to hell. On account of this love of God, God at once raised Him from death and hell, and so He overcame hell ('*eum suscitavit a morte et inferno et sic momordit infernum*'; cp. Osee xiii. 14). All His saints must follow this example, some more, some less; and according to the degree of their perfection in love they find this harder or easier. But Christ bore the most severe form of it ('*durissime hoc fecit*'), and for this reason He laments in many passages (in the Messianic Psalms) the pains of hell."[1]

In the light of passages such as these we can understand to some extent the lurid, fanciful, mystic description which he gives early in 1518, clearly on the strength of his own states of mind. He tells how a man fancies himself at certain moments plunged into hell, and feels his breast pierced by all the pangs of everlasting despair, because he apprehends God's "frightful ire" and the impossibility of ever being delivered. This grotesque picture of a soul, with which we shall deal more fully later, although it is partly taken almost word for word from the earlier descriptions of the mystics, reveals its morbid character more especially by the fact, that the hope, which, in the case of the devout, remains in the depths of the soul even throughout the most severe interior trials, seems entirely absent. God is seen as He appeared to Luther, i.e. as an inexorable, arbitrary punisher of His creature.[2]

Luther's mysticism is veritably a mysticism of despair and the "*humilitas*," with its love ready even for hell, which he belauds as the anchor of safety, is a forced expedient really excluded by his system, and which he himself discarded as soon as he was able to replace it by the (God-given) *fides*, in the shape of faith in personal justification and salvation.

[1] "Schol. Rom., p. 218 f.

[2] The frequently quoted description is to be found in "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 557 f.

10. The Commentary on Romans as a Work of Religion and Learning

The Commentary purports to be as much a religious as a learned work. Its religious value can be shortly summed up from the above.

The author is as much occupied in putting forth religious ideas which appeal to him as in expounding exegetically St. Paul's Epistle, and these ideas he supports on the text of the Epistle to the Romans or on other passages from Holy Scripture which he incessantly adduces. His intention also was to make the considerations of practical use from the religious point of view to his hearers, who were probably most of them Augustinians. He wished to give them a practical introduction to the doctrines of St. Paul, as he understood them, and at the same time to his own mysticism.

We must, if we wish to do justice to the Commentary on Romans, admit without reserve that it does not show us the picture of a man who is morally bankrupt. The author does not make the impression of one bent on sensuality, and seeking the means of gratifying it. The work, on the contrary, breathes a spiritual tendency, even to the point of excess, though not, indeed, without a strong admixture of the earthly element.

The author is, however, far from having arrived at any clear religious views; after wrestling with the secrets of the Pauline Epistle with feeling and eloquence, he is unable even at the end to extricate himself from a condition of spiritual restlessness. The work testifies to an enduring state of religious ferment.

The vivacity and fertility of thought which the author displays is noteworthy; the personal colouring in which he depicts his religious ideas, and, frequently, too, rabidly defends them against scholars and religious who think differently, is unique, and of priceless value to the biographer. Such a strong personal tone is not, it is true, quite in place in a learned work.

The religious "experience," so often supposed to stand in the forefront of his development, is not to be found there.

If the so-called spiritual "experience" had actually taken place Luther would certainly have alluded to it, for he has much to say of his own state and observations. Why does

he say nothing here of the experiences he afterwards relates in such detail? Of the excessive, almost suicidal, monastic practices to which, as a Catholic-minded monk, he surrendered himself, seeking God's grace, until through Divine intervention he recognised that the path of works and strictness of life, in fact the Catholic road generally, was incapable of leading one to peace with God here below and to union with God in eternity? There is nothing here of that sudden leap from weary, self-righteous seeking after God—ostensibly a delusion cherished by all Catholics—to the joyous consciousness of a gracious God, based on the recognition of justification. Luther, on the other hand, gives a seemingly accurate description of his own spiritual development, though without mentioning himself, at the end of his exposition of Romans iii., a passage to which we shall return later.

The author frequently allows his fancied religious interests to spoil his exegesis.

Often enough he does not even make an attempt to follow up the thoughts of the Apostle and arrive at their sense. His character is too impatient of restraint and too predisposed to rhetoric. Thus he descends to the religious and political questions then being debated at Wittenberg and says by way of excuse: "I will explain the meaning of the Apostle to you in its practical sense, in order that you may understand the matter better by the help of some comparisons."[1] These words occur in the passage in which he admonishes Duke George of Saxony regarding his quarrels with Edgard, Count of East Frisia (1514–15), telling him he ought to have recognised the Will of God in the Count's "malicious revolt" and have patiently suffered himself to be vanquished by his foe—as though it were the duty of princes to become mystics like himself.[2]

If we now examine the actual value of the Commentary, we find much that is excellent and calculated to elucidate the Pauline text.

It is especially praiseworthy in Luther that he should have made the Greek text edited by Erasmus the basis of his work as soon as it was published during the course of his lectures. He also makes frequent, diligent and intelligent

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 272. Cp. *ibid.*, p. 301.
[2] Cp. above, p. 228.

use of the "exegetical ability" of Nicholas of Lyra,[1] following him for the text as well as for the interpretation and division of the subject; this was the author whose assistance he had formerly declined with far too much contempt. Other authorities whom he also consults are Paul of Burgos, Peter Lombard, for his explanations of the Epistle to the Romans, and, for the division of the matter, particularly the Schemata of Faber Stapulensis. His own linguistic training and his knowledge of ancient literature were of great service to him, as also was his natural quickness of judgment combined with sagacity. He frequently quotes passages from St. Augustine, and through him, i.e. at second-hand, from Cyprian and Chrysostom; in his interpretations the mediæval authorities of whom he makes most use are the Master of the Sentences and St. Bernard.[2] The way in which Aristotle and the Scholastics are handled is already plain from what we have said. Reminiscences of the works of his own professors, Paltz, Trutfetter and Usingen, are merely general, and he freely differs from them. As an Occamist he feels himself in contradiction to the Thomists and to some extent also to the Scotists; in addition to Occam, d'Ailly, Gerson and Biel have a great influence on him, even in his interpretation of the Bible. Tauler, who has so frequently been mentioned, also left deep traces of his influence not only in the matter of the Commentary, but also in the language, which is often obscure, rich in imagery and full of feeling, while here and there we seem to find reminiscences of the "Theologia Deutsch" which Luther was to publish at the close of his lectures. The latter was, "to his thinking, the most exact expression of the great thoughts of the Epistle to the Romans."[3]

From a learned point of view his exegesis would probably have been different and far more reliable had he consulted the famous Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Epistle to the Romans, not merely for the division of his subject, but also for the matter. This Commentary held the first place, as regards clearness and depth of thought, among previous expositions, yet not once does Luther quote it, and, probably, he had never opened the work for the

[1] J. Ficker in the Preface of his edition of the Commentary, p. liv.
[2] For the sources used by Luther, see Ficker, pp. liii.–lxii.
[3] Thus Ficker, p. lxii.

purpose of study. "It is most remarkable," Wilhelm Braun says, speaking of Luther's Commentary and of his whole development, "that Luther never came to understand Thomas of Aquin. We meet with some disparaging remarks [elsewhere than in the Commentary on Romans]; he is doubtful as to whether St. Thomas was really saved, because he wrote some heretical stuff and brought Aristotle, the corrupter of pious doctrine, into prominence in the Church; but he never understood him from the theological point of view."[1] We might well go further and say, that he did not even do what must certainly precede any "understanding"—study his writings with the intention of carefully examining them.[2]

How greatly does Luther in his method, his manner of delivery and his spirit differ from St. Thomas, from the latter's quiet precision and trustworthiness in following the great traditions of learning and theology. Luther so often speaks without due thought, so often in his impetuosity sees but one side of things, he contradicts himself without remarking it, falls into grotesque exaggeration, and, in many passages, is not merely impulsive in his manner of speech, but even destructive. The rashness with which he lays hands on the generally accepted teaching of the best tried minds, his assumption of supremacy in the intellectual domain, the boundless self-confidence which peeps out of so many of his assertions, gave cause for fearing the worst from this professor, to whose words the University was even then attentive.

He knew well how to hold his listeners by the versatility of his spirit and his ability to handle words. His language comprises, now weighty sentences, now popular and taking comparisons. He speaks, when he is so inclined, in the popular and forcible style he employs at a later date; he borrows from the lips of the populace sayings of unexampled coarseness with which he spices his harangues, more especially

[1] "Die Bedeutung der Concupiscenz in Luthers Leben und Lehre," p. 176.

[2] See above, p. 129. W. Friedensburg, "Fortschritte in Kenntnis der Reformationsgesch" ("Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgesch.," No. 100, 1910, pp. 1–59), p. 17: "It appears [from Denifle's work] that Luther was little acquainted with the Scholastics of the Middle Ages, especially with Thomas of Aquin—which was equally the case with nearly all his contemporaries [?]—and that he drew his information from secondary sources," etc.

with a view to emphasising his attitude to his opponents. We may be permitted to quote one such passage in which he is speaking against those who hold themselves to be pure: "I look on them as the biggest fools, who want to forget how deeply they stick in the mire. . . . Did you never . . . in your mother's lap, and was not the smell evil? Is your perfume always so sweet? Is there nothing about your whole person which has an unpleasant odour? If you are so clean, I am surprised that the apothecaries have not long ago got hold of you to use you in making their balsams, for surely you must reek of balm. Yet had your mother left you as you are and were, you would have perished in your own filth."[1]

Immediately after this he proceeds with a more pleasing thought: "Truly to please oneself, one must be utterly displeased with self. No one can please himself and others at the same time."

He is fond of startling antitheses and frequently loses himself in paradoxes. "God has concealed righteousness under sin, goodness under severity, mercy under anger."[2] "He who does not think he is righteous, is for that very reason righteous before God." "To be sinners does not harm us, if we only strive earnestly for justification."[3]

It may serve to give a better idea of the exegetical value of the whole work, and thereby increase our knowledge of its author, if we consider some of the other peculiarities which permeate it.

Luther frequently engages with great zest in philosophical argument and has skirmishes in dialectics with his adver-

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 335. The reproach brought against these opponents of backbiting forms an exact parallel to Luther's address, "*Contra sanctulos*," mentioned above. Compare the allusions, p. 334, "*Tædiosi sunt et nolunt esse in communione aliorum; sic hæretici, sic multi superbi.*" And before: "*Hi insulsi homines contra totum ordinem* [he is referring to their state or position in life] *insurgunt ac velut ipsi sint mundi, ut nullibi sordeant, cum tamen ante et retro et intus non nisi suum et porcorum sint forum et officina.*" The anecdote which he relates (p. 243 f.) of the man who resolved "*amore Dei velle nunquam mingere*," with which Luther laughs to scorn the desire of some to perform extraordinary works for God's sake, is quite in keeping with this language.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 101. This kind of language which he indulges in at a later date agrees with his character. "His personality presents hundreds of enigmas"; says A. Hausrath in his biography of Luther, 1, p. vii., "of all great men Luther was the most paradoxical.

saries, after the custom of the school of Occam. In such cases he often becomes scarcely intelligible owing to his utter neglect of the rules of logic. The answer he gives to the proofs alleged by "modern philosophers" for the possibility of a natural love of God is very characteristic. They had urged: The will is able to grasp all that reason proposes to it as right and necessary; but reason proposes that we must love God, the cause of all things, and the Highest Good above all. Against this Luther philosophises as follows: "That is decidedly a bad conclusion. The conclusion should be: If the will is able to will everything that reason prescribes shall be willed and performed, then the will may will that God is to be loved above all, as reason says. But it does not follow that the will can love God above all, but merely that it can feebly will that this be done, i.e. the will has just that tiny little bit of will ('*voluntatulam voluntatis habere*') which reason orders it to have." To this Luther adds: "Were that proof correct, then the common teaching would be erroneous that the law [of God in Revelation] has been given in order to humble the proud who presumptuously build on their own powers." And immediately, with supposedly scriptural proofs, he proceeds to show that no power for doing what is good can be ascribed to the will.[1]

In what he says of the position of philosophy to saving grace—a point we mentioned above—we have another example of his faulty method.

It is well known that the old Scholastics, far from drawing their profound teaching concerning sanctifying grace from the "mouldy" stores of Aristotle, advocated, with regard to justification, regeneration and bestowal of sanctifying grace ("*gratia sanctificans*") by the infusion of the Holy Spirit, simply the views contained in Holy Scripture and in the Fathers; but, in order to make her teaching more comprehensible and to insure it against aberrations, the Church clothed it as far as necessary in the language of the generally accepted philosophy. The element which Scholasticism therewith borrowed from Aristotle—or to be accurate not from him only, but, through the Fathers, from ancient philosophy generally—was of service for the comprehension of revealed truth. Luther, however, was opposed to anything which tended to greater definition because he was

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 187. Cp. p. 321.

more successful in expressing his diverging opinions in vague and misapprehended biblical language than in the stricter and more exact language of the philosophical schools.

The Church, on the other hand, has given Scholasticism its due. In the definitions of the Council of Trent on the points of faith which had been called into question, the Church to a certain degree made her own the old traditional expressions of the schools on the doctrine of grace, teaching, for instance, that the "only formal cause of our righteousness lies in the righteousness of God, not in that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just." She declared that, with justifying grace, the "love of God becomes inherent in us," and that with this grace man "receives the infusion ('*infusa accipit*') of faith, hope and charity"; she also speaks of the various causes of justification, of the final, efficient, meritorious, instrumental and formal cause.[1] All these learned terms were admirably fitted to express the ancient views vouched for by the Bible or tradition, and the same may be said, for instance, of the formula sanctioned by the Council of Trent, that "by the sacraments grace is bestowed '*ex opere operato*,'" and that the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Order impart "a 'character,' i.e. a spiritual and ineradicable mark on account of which they cannot be repeated."[2] When the Church expresses herself in such terms with regard to sanctifying grace, she implies thereby no more than what is stated in the various biblical excerpts quoted in detail by the Council of Trent to which Luther had paid too little heed. Her teaching is that man is signed and anointed with the spirit of promise which is the pledge of our inheritance; that he is renewed through the Spirit, and that by the Spirit the love of God is poured forth in his heart; that he becomes a living member of Christ; that because he is made the heir and child of God he has a right to heaven; that he is born again by the Holy Ghost to a new life, and thus is translated into the Kingdom of the Love of His Son where he has redemption and forgiveness of sins; as such he is a friend and companion of God; yet

[1] Sess. 6, c. 7. Cp. c. 16: "*Quæ enim*," etc. In can. 11 of this session "inherent" charity is again mentioned, and in can. 10 the righteousness by which we are "*formaliter iusti*." Cp. Luther's bitter attack on the expression "*fides formata caritate*" (see above, p. 209)

[2] Sess. 7, can. 8, 9.

he must go on from virtue to virtue and, as the Apostle says, be renewed from day to day by constantly mortifying the members of his flesh and offering them as the weapons of righteousness for sanctification.

In his Commentary on Romans Luther already breaks away from tradition, i.e. from the whole growth of the past, even on matters of the utmost moment, and this not at all to the advantage of theology; not merely the method and mode of expression does he oppose, but even the very substance of doctrine.

Protestant theology, following in his footsteps, went further. Many of its representatives, as we shall see, honestly expressed their serious doubts as to whether the Bible teaching of sanctification by grace—that process which, according to the scriptural descriptions just quoted, takes place in the very innermost being of man—is really expressed correctly by the Lutheran doctrine of the imputation of a purely extraneous righteousness. But even to-day there are others who still support Luther's views in a slightly modified form, and who will have it that the scholastic and later teaching of the Church is a doctrine of mere "magic," as though she made of saving grace a magical power, of which the agency is baptism or absolution. It is true that the process of sanctification as apprehended by faith is to a large extent involved in impenetrable mystery, but in Christianity there is much else which is mysterious. It is perhaps this mysterious element which gives offence and accounts for Catholic doctrine being described by so opprobrious a word as "magic." Some Protestants of the same school are also given to praising Luther—in terms which are also, though in another sense, mysterious and obscure—for having from the very outset arrived at the great idea of grace peculiar to the Reformed theology, viz. at the "exaltation of religion above morality." He was the first to ask: "How do I stand with regard to my God?" and who made the discovery, of which his Commentary on Romans is a forcible proof, that it is "man's relation to God through faith which creates the purer atmosphere in which alone it is possible for morality to thrive." He arrived, so we are told, at an apprehension of grace as "a merciful consideration of the abiding sinner," and a true "consolation of conscience"; he at the same time recog-

nised grace as an "educative and moulding energy," which, as such, imparts "strength for sanctification."[1]

To return to the exegetical side of the Commentary on Romans, the confusion in which the ideas are presented lends to much of it a stamp of great imperfection. There is a general lack of cautious, intelligent comprehension of the material, which sometimes is concerned with the tenderest questions of faith, sometimes with vital points of morals. The impartial observer sees so many traces of passion, irritation, storm and stress that he begins to ask himself whether the work has any real theological value.

The passage, Romans vii. 17, regarding the indwelling of sin in man ("*habitat in me peccatum*") Luther, in the interests of his system, makes use of for an attack upon the Scholastics ("*nostri theologi*"). He attributes to them an interpretation of the passage which was certainly not theirs, and, from his own interpretation, draws strange and quite unfounded inferences. According to the interpretation commonly admitted by almost all exegetists, whether Catholic or Protestant, St. Paul is here speaking of the unregenerate man in whom sin dwells, preventing him from fulfilling the law. Luther, on the contrary, asserts that the Apostle is alluding to himself and to the regenerate generally, and he quotes from the context no less than twelve proofs that this is the correct interpretation.[2] Scholastics either referred the passage, like St. Augustine, to the righteous—in whom on account of the survival of the "*fomes peccati*" sin in some sense dwells, even the righteous being easily led away by the same to sin—or they left the question open and allowed the verse to refer to those who are not justified.

Luther, delighted by his discovery of the survival of original sin in man after baptism, could not allow the opportunity to slip of dealing a blow at the older theologians: "Is it not a fact that the fallacious metaphysics of Aristotle—the philosophy which is built up on human tradition—has blinded our theologians? They fancy that sin is destroyed in Baptism and in

[1] "Educative" grace which imparts "strength" is probably what we call actual grace, not sanctifying grace. Luther makes no distinction either as regards the term or the matter. His determinism, with its "*servum arbitrium*," left no room for actual grace to perform any real work; this he admits more plainly of the time preceding justification than of that which follows it. Cp. "Schol. Rom.," p. 206: "*Ad primam gratiam sicut et ad gloriam semper nos habemus passive sicut mulier ad conceptum*," etc. It is here he introduces his "mystical" recommendation, viz. to suffer God's strong grace, and without any act of reason or will "*in tenebras ac velut in perditionem et annihilationem ire*," however hard that may be. Here we find nothing about any "educative and moulding energy."

[2] "Schol. Rom.," pp. 170–6.

the sacrament of Penance, and they declare it absurd that the Apostle should speak of sin dwelling within him [as a matter of fact the Schoolmen did nothing of the sort]. The words '*habitat in me peccatum*' were a fearful scandal to them. They fled to the false and pernicious assertion that Paul is speaking merely in the person of the carnal man [unregenerate], whereas he is, in truth, speaking of his own person [and of the righteous]. They say foolishly that in the righteous there is no sin, and yet the Apostle obviously teaches the contrary in the plainest and most open fashion."[1]

Of this passionate reversal of the old exegesis, Denifle, after having pointed out the real state of the question by quoting the commentators, says: "Luther merely exhibits his ignorance, prejudice and prepossession . . . he was not acting in the interests of learning at all."[2] Of Luther's twelve arguments in favour of his interpretation he remarks: "in order to convince oneself that the [opposite] view, now almost universally held, is the correct one, it is only necessary to glance at Luther's twelve proofs. They are utterly fallacious, beg the question and take for granted what is not conceded."[3] This judgment is amply justified. Yet Luther, at the end of his long demonstration, exclaims: "It is really surprising that anyone could have imagined that the Apostle was speaking in the person of the old and carnal man." "No, the Apostle teaches regarding the justified that they are at the same time righteous and sinners, righteous because Christ's righteousness covers them and is imputed to them, sinners because they do not fulfil the law and are not without concupiscence."[4] We can only say of Luther's remarks on the Scholastics that, without really being acquainted with them, he here again blindly abuses them because they were opposed to his new theological views.

It was merely his prejudice against the Scholastics which led him to continue: "Their stupid doctrine has deceived the world and caused untold mischief, for the consequence was, that whoever was baptised and absolved at once looked upon himself as free from sin, became sure of his righteousness, folded his arms, and, because he was unconscious of any sin, considered it superfluous to trouble to struggle or to purify himself by sighs and tears, by sorrow for sin and efforts to conquer it. No, sin remains even in the spiritual man," etc. He appeals to St. Augustine, indeed to the very passage to which the Scholastics were indebted for their interpretation of St. Paul's words concerning the righteous. As remarked before (p. 98), Augustine is, however, very far from teaching that there is in the righteous real guilt and sin, when, following St. Paul, he speaks of the sinful concupiscence which dwells in the regenerate.

Luther would have avoided a great number of mistakes in his

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 178.
[2] "Luther und Luthertum," 1^1, p 515 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 517, n. 3.
[4] "Schol. Rom.," p. 175 f.

interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans had he conscientiously studied the older expositors instead of blindly opposing them.

The passage in Hebrews xi. 1, which was of the greatest importance for his views ("*Est fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium*"), he interprets in a false sense, whereas St. Thomas takes it correctly. He takes "*substantia*," etc. (ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις πραγμάτων) as "*possessio et facultas futurarum rerum*," and the word "*argumentum*" (ἔλεγχος) as "*signum.*"[1] It was only in 1519 that he learnt from Melanchthon that this interpretation could not be made to agree with the Greek text. Even when making known his mistake he gives a side hit at the *Sententiarii*, i.e. the Scholastics. And yet he would have found the correct interpretation in St. Thomas's "*Summa Theologica*," and also in his Commentary on Romans, viz. that "*substantia*" here means foundation, or first beginning ("*fides est prima pars iustitiæ*"), while "*argumentum*" has the sense of firm assent, i.e. to the truth that "is not seen."[2]

To sum up briefly here some of the fundamental theological confusions of which the author of the Commentary on Romans is guilty, either from carelessness or in the excitement of controversy, we may mention that he confuses freedom with willingness or joyousness, the works of the Mosaic law with the works of natural or Christian morality, true humility with self-annihilation and despair, confidence with presumption; to him true contrition is grief sensibly manifested, all charity other than perfect is mere perverse self-seeking, and holy fear of the Divine judgment and penalties is a slavish, selfish service.

The freedom of the Christian spirit, bestowed by the gospel in contradistinction to Judaism, Luther, owing to persistent misapprehension, makes out to be freedom regarding outward things of the law. Appealing to St. Paul's teaching concerning the liberty of the gospel, he says: "we must not be subject to the burden of any law to such an extent as to consider the outward works of the law necessary for salvation."[3] Those who do so are, according to him, attached to "a spiritual, but exceedingly reprehensible" view, which we must oppose with all our might. Away with those whose aim it is to "fulfil the law by means of many observances." "The law is to be observed not because we must keep it, but because we choose to do so, not because it is necessary, but because it is per-

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 234 f., 277. [2] Cp. Denifle, 1, p. 518 f.
[3] "Schol. Rom.," p. 303.

mitted." Instead of this, he continues, we bow to-day under the yoke of servitude, fancy it is necessary and yet wish secretly that it did not exist ("*Hæc servitus hodie late grassatur*," etc.). The effect of such distorted principles on his views regarding the commandments of the Church is very obvious. "Concerning the outward service of God," as Denifle has already pointed out, "Luther went to great lengths in his defence of '*libertas*.' . . . The believer is free as regards all things; '*sufficit charitas de corde puro*' he frequently repeated at the very time when he was vindicating himself against the errors of the Picards."[1] Though as yet still far from the revulsion which was to come later he was already cherishing the principles which were to lead up to it.

What he says on obedience and personality in dealing with Romans x. and the word of faith which calls for submission, exhibits a strange medley of excessive mystical severity combined with a free handling of his own views, and also some good examples of his stormy dialectics. It is worth our while to dwell a little on these passages because the train of thought furnishes a curious picture of the direction of the young Monk's mind.

"The faith [which justifies] allows itself to be led in any direction,"[2] he says, "and is ready to hear and to yield; for God does not require great works, but the putting to death of the old man, but to this we cannot attain without submitting our own ideas and judgment to the authority of another. . . ." He then continues, vaguely confusing faith and humility: "The old man is to be put to death by faith in the Word of God. But God's Word is not only that which sounds from heaven, but everything that comes from the mouth of a good man, more particularly from our ecclesiastical superiors. That is why the quarrelsome will hear nothing of this faith and take offence at the word of faith. Instead of believing they demand proofs and always think their own ideas right, and those of others false. But whoever does not know how to submit himself and always fancies he is not in the wrong, exhibits the plainest signs that the old Adam still lives in him and that Christ has not yet risen in him."[3] Then follows a long and tedious description of how "man must surrender his mind to the bondage of the word of the Cross and renounce himself and all that is his until he dies to self."[4]

It is surprising to find in the mouth of Luther such an

[1] "Luther und Luthertum," I, p. 673.
[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 241.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

utterance as that we must receive with submission every word of a godly man in order to possess "faith" in its true meaning, but it reappears on another occasion in the Commentary under quite peculiar circumstances. The passage is a still more glaring instance of confusion and is worth quoting in its entirety on account of its mistaken train of thought and of its self-contradiction and jumping from one point to another, so characteristic of Luther.

The explanation of Romans iii.[1] begins with a general assault on the "proud 'spirituals' in the Church, with their great and many works," the heading chosen being that "Justification does not require works of the law, but true faith which performs works of faith." The works of these "spirituals" are not works of faith, but works of the law, for as they are proud and stiff-necked they "do not believe in the precepts and counsels of those who speak to them of salvation." Christ Himself speaks in the latter, and to refuse to believe them in any one particular is to deny faith in Him altogether ("*fides consistit in indivisibili*"); for the same reason the heretics, if they deny only one article of the faith, really deny the faith as a whole. In a word, these proud folk "lose the whole faith, thanks merely to their stiffness" ("*periit tota fides propter unius sensus pertinaciam*"); so important is it to give way to truth whenever it approaches us in humility! Justification must therefore necessarily take place without the works which those people have in their mind. If a man cannot readily bear contradiction "he certainly cannot be saved; for there is no surer sign that our ideas, words and works are of God than contradiction [!]; everything that is of God must be rejected by man, as we see from the example of our Saviour, and, even if it be not of God, contradiction brings us still greater profit and preserves us from shipwreck."

In support of this perplexing doctrine there follow examples and quotations from the Bible, and finally this conclusion: "it is a safe path when we are reproved, cursed and blamed." He does not seem to notice that this assertion provides a ground of excuse and defence for the so-called "proud 'spirituals,'" for they, too, might argue that his contradiction gave a sanction to their conduct.

Luther seems to have had only himself and his own interests in view when he brought forward these ideas, beginning with the extreme assertion that we must believe every word that a good man speaks; he apparently wished to insist on himself and his followers being given credence, and on their views—which were the views of faithful counsellors—being approved by the defenders of works, whether in his Order or outside of it. As he encountered contradiction, he immediately applied to his own case the very elastic principle, that opposition in religious matters is a guarantee of truth. This was a principle, we may mention, which he had made his own ever since his mystical days, and which at a later

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 86 f.

date and indeed till the end of his life, he repeatedly employed in the service of his cause during his struggle with the Church.

Continuing his harangue against the "spirituals" and the heretics with whom he classes them he goes on to say: "they buoy themselves up in their idle self-complacency on account of their faith in Christ, but in vain, as they will not believe in that which is Christ's. The faith of Christ by which we are justified is not merely faith in Christ, or in the person of Christ, but in all that is Christ's." "Christ is not divided" (1 Cor. i. 13). Faith is something indivisible, Christ and whatever is Christ's is one and the same.[1] Therefore we must believe both in Christ and in the Church, and in "every word that comes from the mouth of an ecclesiastical superior, or of a good, pious man." "But those who withdraw themselves from their superiors will not listen to their words, but follow their own ideas," he again repeats: "how do these, I ask, believe in Christ? They believe in His birth and His sufferings, but not in His whole word, consequently they deny Him altogether. See how necessary is the very greatest humility, as we who believe in Christ can never be sure whether we believe in all that is His, and therefore must remain uncertain as to whether we believe in Him Himself! Justification can only proceed from such a fear and humility. But the proud "do not understand the exalted subtilties of this faith; they think they are in possession of the whole of faith, yet cannot hear the Lord's voice, but rather resist it as though it were false; why? because it is opposed to their own ideas."[2] After a dialectical digression of doubtful character the hot-blooded exegetist continues: All the Prophets rise up against such men, for they always commence their holy message with the words: "Thus saith the Lord" and, "whosoever it be whom the Lord chooses as His mouthpiece, the demand is for faith, resignation, humble subjection of our own ideas; for it is only thus that we are justified, and not otherwise." With incredible tenacity he is ever harping on the assertion that the "self-righteous" only deck themselves out with works of the law, but find no grace with God. And finally, as though he had not yet said a word against those rebels against faith and the Word of God, he cries: "Let those open their ears who believe indeed in Christ, but not in the word of Christ, who do not listen to their superiors and who wish to be justified without this obedience, i.e. without this faith in God and merely by their works." In another outburst he shows them—this time adopting a more mystical tone—that Christ speaks "almost always when, where and as we do not expect."[3] "Who can discover all the wily attacks of Satan by which he deceives us?" Some wish to be justified by a "slavish fear," in spite of their disinclination and 'by their own strength alone"; [4] those whom he deceives more artfully feel a desire for what is good, "but in their self-complacency they affect superstitious singularity ('*singularitatis et superstitionis*

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 87 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 89.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

affectatores '), they become rebels [like the Observantines, see p. 69], and under a show of obedience and love of God they throw off their submission to the men of God, i.e. to the Vicars and messengers of Christ."[1] "It is presumption and pride which changes works of grace into works of the law, and the righteousness of God into human righteousness; for," etc.[2] "How then can you be proud as though you were more righteous than another, how can you despise him who sins, when you yourself [at least, by your evil inclinations] are sunk in the same mire?"[3] etc. "But they receive honour of men on account of their righteousness,"[4] a subject on which Luther proceeds to enlarge.

We have said enough. The torrent of words flows on aimlessly in this way, ever labouring the same subject; all this is given us in lieu of real exegesis as corollaries to two verses of the Epistle to the Romans.

In order to gauge the real value of the Commentary on Romans we must now consider the treatment, abounding in inconsistencies, accorded by Luther to man's efforts for obtaining salvation.

In Luther's mind the idea that God does all, stands side by side with the traditional view of the Church, that man must prepare himself; he has, indeed, a curious knack of remaining quite unconscious of his inconsistencies. On the one hand, according to what he says, we must seek for justification by the exertion of the fullest human effort, and this labour must be so strenuous as to render God propitious to us ("*Deum sibi propitium faciunt*").[5] That is, at least, what we are told at the end of the Commentary, but at the beginning we read: "The faith which is to justify must manifest *its* works, works of the law are not sufficient, it must be 'a living faith which performs its own works.'"[6] "When James and Paul say that man is justified by works, they are opposing the false opinion that faith without its works is sufficient, whereas such a faith is not faith at all."[7] According to this, it is plain, that, at that time, the idea of man's co-operation in the work of salvation by the use of his liberty still hovered in Luther's mind. But any idea of this kind is elsewhere confronted and peremptorily dismissed by another chain of ideas. How are we to make efforts by our own free will when we do not possess free will for doing what is good? "As though," he says, "we had free will at our disposal whenever we want! Such an idea of free will can only serve to lull us into a

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 94. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 95. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 97. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 323 f. Cp. above, p. 218 f.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 86: "*Igitur iustificatio requirit non opera legis, sed vivam fidem, quæ sua operetur opera.*" Cp. above, p. 214, n. 6, where he speaks of the "*præparatio*" for justification by the fulfilling of the law.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 85. It is possible that, without making any distinction, he here passes on to the activity of the righteous. Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, pp. 466, 467, on Luther's want of clearness regarding justifying faith.

false security." ("*Securi stertimus, freti libero arbitrio quod ad manum habentes, quando volumus, possumus pie intendere.*")[1]

Here he will only admit that man has freedom to pray for the right use of his freedom. But, as a matter of fact, even this liberty which might incite us to prayer, is non-existent. For in respect of anything that is good [whether natural or supernatural, he makes no distinction] we are only like raw metal or a wooden stick. Because God's grace is the hand which works in us for good and which performs our vital acts within us, while we ourselves are quiescent and absolutely powerless, Luther says in Romans iii.: "I have frequently insisted before upon the fact, that it is impossible for us to have of ourselves the will or the heart to fulfil the law." Why? "Because the law is spiritual." Meditation on man's enslaved condition as the result of concupiscence, he declares in another passage, proves my contention, no less than the terrible truth of predestination.

"Luther felt in himself that belief in the eternal predestination by God [absolute election to grace] was the most powerful support of his experience of the complete inadequacy of human works and the efficacy of grace alone." The Protestant theologian[2] who says this, to instance Luther's faith in the action of grace, here quotes from the passages from the Commentary on Romans, according to which God on the one hand bestows His grace only on those He chooses, but on the other hand infallibly saves those He elects to save. "The Spirit," Luther has it, "supports the latter by His presence in all their weaknesses, so that they prevail in circumstances where they would otherwise despair a thousand times."[3] It is, however, remarkable that just after this explanation the cry bursts from Luther's lips: "Where are now the good works, where the freedom of the will?" Here the irresistible "action of grace alone" appears as a direct consequence of Luther's then views, though he refrains from expressing himself more clearly as to the nature of actual grace.

Thus in his mind are combined two widely divergent ideas, viz. that God does everything in man who is devoid of freedom—and that man must draw nigh to God by prayer and works of faith. It is a strange psychological phenomenon to see how, instead of endeavouring to solve the contradiction and examine the question in the light of calm reason, he gives free play to feeling and imagination, now passionately proving to the infamous Observants that man is absolutely unable to do anything, now insisting on the need of preparation for grace, i.e. unconsciously becoming the defender of the Church's doctrine of free will and human co-operation. The fact is, he still, to some extent,

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 321. [2] Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 34.
[3] See above, p. 249, n. 1, and p. 204.

thinks with the Church. It was no easy task for him to break away from a view, which is so natural to man and so much in accordance with faith, viz. that there must be some preparation on man's part for justification, in which however, actual grace, which comes to the assistance of his will and becomes part of it, also has its share.

Luther's peculiar mysticism with its preponderance of feeling was, in part, the cause of his overlooking his task, which was to propound from his professorial chair the teaching of the Church in definite and exact terms—so far as this was possible to him with his insufficient theological training. To this may be added the fact that the wealth of biblical quotations, whether to the point or not, which he is wont to adduce, tends to distract and confuse him as soon as he attempts to draw any clear inferences.

According to Denifle a certain progress is apparent in the Commentary on Romans inasmuch as the first three chapters show Luther's new doctrines still in an inchoate form. Luther, there, is seeking for something he has not yet fully grasped, and the confusion of his language is a proof that he has not as yet made up his mind. There is, however, one point, according to Denifle, on which he is quite definite, viz. concupiscence, though he does not yet know how to combine it with his other ideas; but, by the end of chapter iii., this doubt has been set aside, he has identified concupiscence with original sin and reached other conclusions besides. Still he avoids the principal question as to how far human co-operation is necessary in the act of justification.[1]

It is difficult to determine exactly this progress owing to Luther's want of clearness and precision of expression, and to his contradictory treatment of certain capital points. The Commentary on Romans as it proceeds hardly shows any improvement in this respect. With extraordinary elasticity of mind, if we may so speak, the author without the slightest compunction advocates concerning the most profound theological questions, especially grace, ideas which differ from and contradict each other. As at the very commencement we meet some of the most incisive new theses of Lutheranism—the imputation of the righteousness

[1] "Luther und Luthertum," 1^2, p. 447 f., 466 f.

of Christ, the sinfulness of the natural man and his inability to do what is good, and likewise predestination to hell in its most outrageous form—it is natural to infer that Luther had already forsaken the Catholic doctrine on these points at the time he was preparing his lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, i.e. about the summer of 1515. His misapprehension of this Epistle must have had its influence on his whole trend, and the elements already at work in his mind helped to decide him to commit to writing in his Commentary his supposed new and important doctrinal discoveries.

We might expect to find in the Commentary the most noticeable progress where he deals with preparation for grace, for this was surely the point on which he was bound to come into conflict with other doctrines. It is, however, hard to tell whether he realised the difficulty. It is true that much less stress is laid upon preparation for justification as the work proceeds, whereas at the commencement the author speaks unhesitatingly of the cultivation of the will which must be undertaken in order to bring down grace. (See above, p. 214.) This, however, might merely be accidental and due to the fact that, in the last chapters, St. Paul is dealing mainly with the virtues of the justified. Towards the end of the Epistle, in connection with what the Apostle says on charity and faith in the righteous, the nature of that "*humilitas*" which Luther so eulogises as a preliminary and accompaniment of the appropriation of the righteousness of Christ undergoes a change and appears more as faith with charity, or charity with faith. Luther's manner of speaking thus varies according to the subject with which Paul is dealing.

If we take the middle of the year 1515 as the starting-point of Luther's new theology, then many of the statements in his Commentary on the Psalms, especially in its latter part, become more significant as precursors of Luther's errors. The favourable view we expressed above of his work on the Psalms, as regards its agreement with the theology of the Church, was only meant to convey that a Catholic interpretation of the questionable passages was possible; this, however, cannot be said of the theses in the Commentary on Romans which we have just been considering. We now understand why unwillingness to allow

any ability in man to do what is good is the point in which Luther's work on the Psalms goes furthest. There the doctrine of his "*profundior theologia*" is: "We must account ourselves as nothing, as sinful, liars, as dead in God's sight; we must not trust in any merits of our own." There, too, we find paradoxes such as the following: "God is wonderful in His saints, the most beautiful is to Him the most hideous, the most infamous the most excellent; whoever thinks himself upright, with him God is not pleased. . . . In the recognition of this lie the pith of the Scripture and the kernel of the heavenly grain."[1] Such expressions are, it is true, not unlike what we sometimes hear from the Church's theologians and saints, but in the light of the Commentary on Romans they become more important as signs of transition.

We must not forget, in view of the numerous enigmas which the boldness of the Commentary on Romans presents, that it bears merely a semi-public character and was not intended for publication. In this work, destined only for the lecture-room, Luther did not stop to weigh or fine down his words, but gave the reins to his impulse, thus offering us a so much the more interesting picture of his inmost thoughts.

Some important particulars, in which this work differs from other public utterances made by Luther about the same time, are to be explained by the familiarity with which he is speaking to his pupils.

In the sermons on the Ten Commandments, published in 1518 but preached in the two preceding years and consequently intended for general consumption, he speaks differently of concupiscence than in the Commentary. In the sermons he declares that desires so long as they are involuntary are certainly not sinful. He even says to a man who is troubled on account of his involuntary temptations against purity: "No, no, you have not lost your chastity by such thoughts; on the contrary, you have never been more chaste if you are only sure they came to you against your will. . . . It is a true sign of a lively sense of chastity when a man feels displeasure, and it need not even be absolute displeasure, otherwise there would be no attraction; he is in an uncertain state, now willing, now unwilling. . . . In

[1] Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 74 f., who sees in such passages the trace of "Augustinian-Bernardine piety," which formed "the inner link between Luther and (the mystic) Staupitz."

the struggle for chastity the little bark is tossed hither and thither on the waters, while [according to the gospel] Christ is asleep within. Rouse Christ so that He may command the sea, i.e. the flesh, and the wind, i.e. the devil."[1] In the public Indulgence theses of 1517, he is also careful not to express his erroneous views on grace and the nature of man. It is characteristic of him how he changes even the form of expression when repeating an assertion which is also made in the Commentary on Romans. In the Commentary he had written, that too great esteem of outward works led to a too frequent granting of Indulgences, and that the Pope and the Bishops were more cruel than cruelty itself if they did not freely grant the same, or even greater Indulgences, for God's sake and the good of souls, seeing that they themselves had received all they had for nothing.[2] This violent utterance here appears as the expression of his own opinion. In the theses, however, he presents the same view to the public with much greater caution; he says, these and similar objections brought forward by scrupulous laymen, were caused, contrary to the wishes of the Pope, by dissolute Indulgence preachers; one might hear "such-like calumnious charges and subtle questions from seculars," and they must "be taken into account and answered."[3]

The ideas contained in the Commentary on Romans are also to be met with in the other lectures which followed. Of this the present writer convinced himself by glancing through the Vatican copies. The approaching publication of the copies in the "Anfänge reformatorischer Bibelauslegung," of Johann Ficker, a work which commenced with the Commentary on Romans, will supply further details. The character of the Wittenberg Professor is, however, such that we may expect some surprising revelations. Generally speaking, a movement in the direction of the doctrine of "faith alone" is noticeable throughout his work.

In view of Ficker's forthcoming edition it will suffice to quote a few excerpts from the Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews of 1517, according to the Vatican MS. (Pal. lat. 1825).[4] They show that the author in his exegesis of this Epistle is imbued with the same idea as in the Commentary on Romans, namely, that Paul exalts (in Luther's

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 486.
[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 243.
[3] Thes., 81 *seq.*, 90. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 291 *seq.* Weim. ed., 1, pp. 625, 627.
[4] Regarding this MS. see Ficker's Introduction to the Commentary on Romans, p. xxix. f.

sense) the redemption in Christ, and Grace, in opposition to righteousness by works. They also betray how he becomes gradually familiar with the doctrine that faith alone justifies, without any longer placing humility in the foreground as the intermediary of justification as he once had done.

On folio 46 of the MS. he says: "We should notice how Paul in this Epistle extols grace as against the pride of the law and of human righteousness ('*extollit adversus superbiam*' etc.). He proves that without Christ neither the law, nor the priesthood, nor prophecy, nor the service of angels sufficed, but that all these were established with a view to the coming Christ. It is therefore his intention to teach Christ only."

On folio 117 Luther sets forth the difference between "purity in the New and in the Old Testament." In the New Law the Blood of Christ brings inward purification. "As conscience cannot alter sin that has been committed and is utterly unable to escape the future wrath, it is necessarily terrified and oppressed wherever it turns. From this state of distress it can be released only by the Blood of Christ. If it looks in faith upon this Blood, it believes and knows that by the same its sins are washed away and removed. Thus it is purified by faith and at the same time quieted, so that, in joy over the remission of its sins, it no longer fears punishment. No law can assist in this purification, no works, in fact nothing but the Blood of Christ alone ('*ad hanc munditiam . . . nihil nisi unicus hic sanguis Christi facere potest*'), and even this cannot accomplish it unless man believes in his heart that it has been shed for the remission of sin. For it is necessary to believe the testator when He says: 'This Blood which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins.'"

From Paul's words he goes on to infer that "good works done outside of grace are sins, in the sense that they may be called dead works. For if, without the Blood of Christ, conscience is morally impure, it can only perform what corresponds with its nature, namely, what is impure. . . ." Folio 117': "It follows that a good, pure, quiet, happy conscience can only be the result of faith in the forgiveness of sins. But this is founded only on the Word of God, which assures us that Christ's Blood was shed unto the remission of sins."

Folio 118: "It follows that those who contemplate the sufferings of Christ only from compassion, or from some other reason than in order to attain to faith, contemplate them to little purpose, and in a heathenish manner. . . . The more frequently we look upon the Blood of Christ the more firmly must we believe that it was shed for our own sins; for this is 'to drink and eat spiritually,' to grow strong through this faith in Christ and to become incorporated in Him."

CHAPTER VII

SOME PARTICULARS WITH REGARD TO THE OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES AND INWARD LIFE OF LUTHER AT THE TIME OF THE CRISIS

1. Luther as Superior of eleven Augustinian Houses

His election as Rural Vicar, which took place at the convocation of the Order at Gotha (on April 29, 1515), had raised Luther to a position of great importance in his Congregation.

He had, within a short time, risen from being Sub-Prior and Regent of the Wittenberg House of Studies to be the chief dignitary in the Congregation after Staupitz, the Vicar-General. The office was conferred on him, as was customary, for a period of three years, i.e. till May, 1518. Of the eleven monasteries which formed the District the two most important and influential were Erfurt and Wittenberg. The others were Dresden, Herzberg, Gotha, Langensalza, Nordhausen, Sangershausen, Magdeburg and Neustadt on the Orla, to which Eisleben was added, when, in July, 1515, Staupitz and Luther presided at the opening of a new monastery there. As Staupitz was frequently absent from the District, the demands made on the activity of the new Superior were all the greater.

At this time too his professorial Bible studies and his efforts to clear up the confusion and difficulties existing in his mind must have kept him fully occupied. In addition to this there was the dissension within the Order itself on the question of observance and of the constitution, a dispute which required for its settlement a man filled with zeal for the spiritual welfare of the monasteries, and one thoroughly devoted to the exalted traditional aims of the Congregation.

The mordant discourse on the "Little Saints" which the fiery Monk delivered on May 1 at the Gotha meeting

showed in what direction the influence of the new Rural Vicar would be exerted. Johann Lang, his friend who was present at the time, had a good reason for sending this discourse to Mutian, the head of the Humanists at Gotha; the bitter critic of the "uncharitable self-righteous" gave promise of the establishing of a freer ideal of life in the Order, and so original and powerful a speaker was certain to be strong enough to draw others with him.

What has been preserved of Luther's correspondence with the priories and the monks of his District is unfortunately very meagre; the remarkable rapidity with which the Lutheran innovations spread among the Augustinians speaks, however, at a later date very plainly of the powerful influence which he had exerted on his brother monks during the years that he held the office of Rural Vicar. The first result of his influence was to bring into the ascendant a conception of the aims of the Order differing from that of the Observantines. Hand in hand with this went the recruiting of followers for his new theological ideas and for the so-called Augustinian or Pauline movement, of which the Wittenberg Faculty was the headquarters.

Johann Lang prepared the ground for Luther at the Erfurt monastery, whither he went in 1515 and where he became Prior in 1516. The Augustinian, George Spenlein, Luther's Wittenberg friend, to whom he addressed the curious, mystical letter on Christ's righteousness (above, p. 88 f.), became, later on, a Lutheran preacher and parson at Arnstadt. Luther, during his Vicariate, had as Prior at Wittenberg his friend Wenceslaus Link, who was also Doctor and Professor in the Theological Faculty. He was, however, relieved of his office of Prior in 1516, left Wittenberg and went to Munich as preacher, whence he removed to Nuremberg at the beginning of 1517; in that town he became later a zealous promoter of the Reformation. The friendship which Luther had formed at Wittenberg with George Spalatin, the astute courtier in priest's dress, was, however, of still greater importance to him in his work both within the Order and outside. Spalatin, who had received a humanist training under Marschalk and Mutian at Erfurt, came in 1511 to Wittenberg, where he entered the family of the Elector as tutor to his two nephews, and, in 1513, was promoted to the office of Court Chaplain and private secre-

tary to the Elector. He readily undertook the management at Court of the business in connection with the priories under Luther's supervision, and, later on, contrived by his influence in high quarters to promote the spread of the religious innovations.

The letters which Luther wrote as Vicar he signed, as a rule, "Frater Martinus Luther," though sometimes "Luder, Augustinensis," usually with the addition "Vicarius," and on one occasion "Vicarius Districtus," which, needless to say, does not mean "the strict vicar" as it has been mistranslated, but refers to his office as Rural Vicar of the District.

In these letters, chiefly in Latin, which Luther addressed to his monasteries, we meet with some pages containing beautiful and inspiring thoughts. There can be no question that he knew how to intervene with energy where abuses called for it, just as he also could speak words of consolation, encouragement and kindly admonition to those in fault. The letters also contain some exhortations, well-worded and full of piety, tending to the moral advancement of zealous members of the Order. The allusions to faith in Christ, our only help, and the absolute inadequacy of human effort, are, however, very frequent, though he does not here express his new theological opinions so definitely as he does in expounding St. Paul.

To Johann Lang, who, as Prior of the Erfurt house, met with many difficulties from his subordinates, he writes comforting and consoling him: "Be strong and the Lord will be with you; call to mind that you are set up for a sign which shall be contradicted (Luke ii. 34), to the one, indeed, a good odour unto life, to another an odour of death (2 Cor. ii. 16)."[1] At Erfurt, as the same letter shows, he had to intervene in the interests of discipline. In order that no complaints might be brought against the Prior by the brethren on account of the expenses for food and drink in entertaining guests and for the keep of those who collected the alms (*terminarii*) he orders an exact account to be kept of such expenses; the hostel for guests might, he says, become a real danger to the monastery if not properly regulated; the monastery must not be turned into a beer-house or tavern, but must remain a religious house. To uphold "the honour of the Reverend Father Vicar," Staupitz, he directed that three contumacious monks should be removed, by way of punishment, from Erfurt to a less important convent. On the occasion of some unpleasantness which Lang experienced from his brother monks,

[1] May 29, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 37 f.

Luther impressed on him that, after receiving this blow on the one cheek, he should bravely present the other also; "and this is not the last and worst slap you will have to endure, for God's wisdom is as yet playing with you and preparing you for greater struggles."[1]

"Be mild and friendly to the Prior of Nuremberg," he says to him at a later date; "it is necessary to be so, just because he is harsh and unfriendly. One who is severe cannot get the better of a hard man, but he who is mild can, just as one devil cannot overcome another, but the finger of God must do this."[2]

And again, "As regards the brother who has fallen away, take pity on him in the Lord. He has forsaken you, led astray by impiety, but you must not on that account be wanting in charity and turn your back upon him. Do not take the scandal too much to heart. We have been called, baptised and ordained in order to bear the burdens of others, for this reason the office clothes our own wretchedness with honour. We must, according to the proverb, ourselves cover our neighbour's shame, as Christ was, still is, and for all eternity will be our covering, as it is written: 'Thou art a priest for ever' (Heb. v. 6). Therefore beware of desiring to be so clean that you will not allow yourself to be touched by what is unclean, or of refusing to put up with uncleanness, to cover it over and to wipe it away. You have been raised to a post of honour, but the task it involves is to bear dishonour. It is on the cross and on affronts that we must pride ourselves."[3]

At the commencement of the autumn term in 1516, he complained that Lang was sending him too many brothers to study at Wittenberg, more in fact than he was able to provide for,[4] and later, as the reason for his concern, he mentions that the Wittenberg house already numbered 41 inmates, of whom 22 were priests and 12 students, "who all have to live on our more than scanty means; but the Lord will provide."[5]

At that time it was feared that Wittenberg might suffer from an attack of the plague which was raging in the vicinity, and which actually did break out there in October. Luther reassures the troubled Prior of Erfurt, who had besought him to depart: "It is possible that the plague may interfere with the lectures on the Epistle to the Galatians which I have just commenced. But, so far, it only snatches away two or three victims daily at most, and sometimes even fewer. . . . And whither should I flee? I trust the heavens will not fall even should brother Martin be

[1] August 30, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 49.

[2] In September (?), 1516, *ibid.*, p. 57.

[3] October 5, 1516, *ibid.*, p. 60. The expression covering of our shame occurs frequently in his writings, thus it appears in "Schol. Rom.," p. 334, where Gal. vi. 1 ("*Alter alterius onera portate*") is rendered: "*Alter alterius ignominiam portate*"; Christ too willingly bore our shame.

[4] September (?), 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 54.

[5] October 26, 1516, *ibid.*, p. 67.

stricken. I shall send the brothers away and distribute them should the mischief increase; I have been appointed here and obedience does not allow of my taking flight, unless a new order be imposed on me to obey. Not as though I do not fear death, I am not a Paul but merely an expounder of Paul; but I trust that the Lord will deliver me from my fear."[1]

When a member of the Teutonic Order sought for admission into the Augustinian house at Neustadt, Luther instructed the Prior there, Michael Dressel (Tornator) to observe very carefully the ecclesiastical and conventual regulations provided for such a case. "We must, it is true, work with God in the execution of this pious project," he writes, "but we shall do this not by allowing the ideas of the individual, however pious his intentions may be, to decide the matter, but by carrying out the prescribed law, the regulations of our predecessors, and the decrees of the Fathers: whoever sets these aside need not hope to advance or find salvation, however good his will may be."[2]

This Prior also had complained of the numerous contrarieties which he experienced from his subordinates, and that he was unable to enjoy any peace of soul. Luther says to him among other things:[3] "The man whom no one troubles is not at peace,—that is rather the peace of this world, but the man to whom people bring all their troubles and who nevertheless remains calm and bears everything that happens with joy. You say with Israel: 'Peace, peace, and there is no peace!' Say rather with Christ: the cross, the cross, there is no cross.[4] The cross will at once cease to be a cross when a man accepts it joyfully and says: Blessed cross, sacred wood, so holy and venerable! . . . He who with readiness embraces the cross in everything that he feels, thinks and understands will in time find the fruit of his suffering to be sweet peace. That is God's peace, under which our thoughts and desires must be hidden in order that they may be nailed to the cross, i.e. to the cross of contradiction and oppression. Thus is peace truly established above all our thinking and desiring, and becomes the most precious jewel. Therefore take up all these disturbances of your peace with joy and clasp them to you as holy relics, instead of endeavouring to seek peace according to your own ideas."

When Luther afterwards visited the monastery of this same Prior, on the occasion of an official visitation, he found the community estranged from its head. He did not at that time take any steps, but after a few weeks he suddenly removed Michael Dressel from his office. In confidence he informed Johann Lang, rather cryptically, that: "I did this because I hoped to rule there myself for the half-year."[5] Do the words

[1] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 68. [2] June 22, 1516, *ibid.*, p. 42. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[4] Cp. Luther's Indulgence theses, 92 and 93, where "*pax, pax,*" and "*crux, crux*" are repeated in the same way. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 291. "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 628.

[5] October 26, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 68: "*Feci ideo, quod sperabam, me ipsum illic ad medium annum regnaturum.*"

perhaps mean that he was anxious to secure a victory for that party in the Order which was devoted to himself and opposed to Dressel, who on this hypothesis was an Observantine? His action was peculiar from the fact that his letter addressed to the community at Neustadt and to Dressel himself gave no reason for the measure against the Prior other than that the brothers were unable to live with him in peace and agreement; the Prior, he says, had always had the best intentions, but it is not enough for a Superior to be good and pious, "it is also necessary that the others should be at peace and in agreement with him"; when a Superior's measures fail to establish concord, then he should revoke them.[1] Still more unusual than such advice was the circumstance that Luther would not allow the Prior to make any defence, and cut short any excuses by his sudden action. In another letter to the monks he justified his measure simply by stating that there was no peace. In short, the rebellious monks speedily got the better of the Superior whom they disliked. The ex-Prior, Luther tells him, must on no account murmur because he has been judged without a hearing ("*quia te non auditum iudicaverim*"); he himself (Luther) was convinced of his good will and also hoped that all the inmates of the convent were grateful to him for the good intentions which he had displayed. In the new election ordered by the Rural Vicar, Heinrich Zwetze was chosen as Prior. Of the latter or how the matter ended nothing more is known.

The office of Rural Vicar required above all, that, when making his regular visitation of the religious houses, the Vicar should have a personal interview with each brother, hear what he had to say, and give him any spiritual direction of which he might stand in need. We learn the following of a visitation of this kind which Luther made in 1516: At the Gotha monastery the whole of the visitation occupied only one hour; at Langensalza two hours. He informs Lang: "In these places the Lord will work without us and direct the spiritual and temporal affairs in spite of the devil."[2] He at once proceeded on the same journey to the house at Nordhausen and then on to those at Eisleben and Magdeburg. In two days the Rural Vicar was back in his beloved Wittenberg. There is no doubt that such summary treatment of his most important duties was not favourable to discipline.

At Leitzkau the Augustinians possessed rights over the large fisheries and Luther was intimate with the local Cistercian Provost. When the Provost, George Maskov,

[1] September 25, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 51.
[2] May 29, 1516, *ibid.*, p. 38.

asked him how he should behave towards a brother monk who had sinned grievously, seeing that he himself was a still greater offender, Luther replied, saying, among other things, that he ought certainly to punish him, for, as a rule, it was necessary to exercise discipline towards those who are better than ourselves. "We are all children of Adam, therefore we do the works of Adam." But "our authority is not ours, but God's." Perhaps God desired to help that brother on the road of sin, namely, through shame. "It is God Who does all this."[1] And in another letter he says to the Provost:[2] "If many of your subjects are on the way to moral ruin, yet you must not for that reason disquiet them all. It is better quietly to save a few. . . . Let the cockel grow together with the wheat . . . for it is better to bear with the many for the sake of the few than to ruin the few on account of the many." In a mystical vein he says: "Pray for me, for my life is daily drawing nearer to hell (i.e. the lower world, '*inferno appropinquavit*,' Ps. lxxxvii. 4), as I also become worse and more wretched day by day."[3]

Bodily infirmities were then pressing hard upon him in consequence of his many labours and spiritual trials, while much of his time was swallowed up by his lectures which were still in progress.

2. The Monk of Liberal Views and Independent Action

With regard to his own life as a religious and his conception of his calling Luther was, at the time of the crisis, still far removed from the position which he took up later, though we find already in the Commentary on Romans views which eventually could not fail to place him in opposition to the religious state.

What still bound him to the religious life was, above all, the ideal of humility, which his mystical ideas had developed. He also recognised fully the binding nature of his vows. According to him man cannot steep himself sufficiently in

[1] May 17, 1517, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 99.
[2] Undated (1516 ?), *ibid.*, p. 77.
[3] From the latter months of 1516, *ibid.*, p. 76: "*Confiteor tibi, quod vita mea in dies appropinquat inferno, quia quotidie peior fio et miserior.*"

his essential nothingness before the Eternal God, and vows are an expression of such submission to the Supreme Being.

"To love is to hate and condemn oneself, yea even to wish evil to oneself." "Our good is hidden so deeply that it is concealed under its opposite; thus life is hidden under death, real egotism under hatred of self, honour under shame, salvation under destruction, a kingdom under exile, heaven under hell, wisdom under foolishness, righteousness under sin, strength under weakness; indeed all our affirmation of any good is concealed under its negation in order that faith in God, Who is the negation of all, may remain supreme . . . thus 'our life is hidden with Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3), i.e. in the negation of all that can be felt, possessed and apprehended. . . . That is the good which we must desire for ourselves," he says to his brother monks, "then only are we good when we recognise the good God and our evil self."[1]

He says elsewhere regarding vows: "All things are, it is true, free to us, but by means of vows we can offer them all up out of love; when this has once taken place, then they are necessary, not by their nature but on account of the vow which has been taken voluntarily. Then we must be careful to keep the vows with the same love with which we took them upon us, otherwise they are not kept at all."[2] In many points he goes further than the Rule itself in the mystical demands he makes upon the members of the Order.

In other respects Luther's requirements not only fall far short of what is necessary, but even the ordinary monastic duties fare badly at his hands. If it is the interior word which is to guide the various actions, and if without the "spirit" they are nothing, indeed would be better left undone, then what place is left to the common observance of the monastic Rule and the numerous pious practices, prayers and acts of virtue to which a regular time and place are assigned?

From the standpoint of his pseudo-mystical perfection he criticises with acerbity the recitation of the Office in Choir; also the "unreasonableness and superstition of pious founders of benefices," who, as it were, "desired to purchase prayers" at certain fixed times. Founders of a monastery ought not to have prescribed the recitation of the Office in Choir on their behalf; by so doing they wished to secure their own salvation and well-being before God, instead of making their offerings purely for God's sake.[3] Such remarks plainly show that he was already far

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 219 f. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 317.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

removed in spirit from a right appreciation of his Order. He had also expressed himself against the mendicancy practised by the Augustinians, and yet the Order was a Mendicant Order and the collecting of alms one of its essential statutes.[1]

Nevertheless, again and again he speaks in lofty language of the value of the lowliness of the religious life. Now especially, he writes in the Commentary on Romans under the influence of his mystical "*theologia crucis*," it is a good thing to be a religious, better than during the last two centuries. Why? Because now monks are no longer so highly esteemed as formerly, they are hated by the world and looked upon as fools, and are "persecuted by the bishops and clergy"; therefore the religious ought to rejoice in their cross and in their state of humiliation.[2]

Whoever takes vows imposes upon himself "a new law" out of love for God; he voluntarily renounces his own freedom in order to obey his superiors, who stand in God's place. The vows are for him indissoluble bonds, but bonds of love.[3] "Whoever wishes to enter the cloister," he says,[4] "because he thinks he cannot otherwise be saved, ought not to enter. We must beware of exemplifying the proverb: 'despair makes a monk'; despair never made a monk, but only a devil.[5] We must enter from the motive of love, namely, because we perceive the weight of our sins and are desirous of offering our Lord something great out of love; for this reason we sacrifice to Him our freedom, assume the dress of a fool, and submit to the performance of lowly offices."

His complaints are very serious and certainly somewhat prejudiced, owing partly to his new theology, partly to his wrong perception of the facts.

"Whoever keeps his vows with repugnance is behaving sacrilegiously."[6] Even he who is animated by the best of motives scarcely acts from perfect love, but when this is entirely absent, he says, "we sin even in our good works."[7] Many who fulfil their religious duties merely from routine and with indolence "are apostates though they do not appear to be such," and in his excessive zeal he continues: "the religious in the Church to-day are held captive under a Mosaic bondage, and together with them the clergy and the laity because they cling to the doctrines of men ('*doctrinæ hominum*'); we all believe that without these

[1] See above, p. 71. [2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 318.
[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*
[5] Of himself he says at a later date: I went into the convent "because I despaired of myself." (See above, p. 4.)
[6] "Schol. Rom.," p. 317. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

there is no salvation, but that with these salvation is assured without any further effort on our part."[1]

On the same occasion he allows himself to be carried away from the subject of monasticism to the complaints regarding the too frequent Feasts and Fasts and the formalism pervading the whole life of the Church, to which we referred on page 227. Returning to the monks, he declares that he finds the interior man so greatly lacking in them that (without considering the many exceptions) they were the cause of the hostile attitude which the world assumed towards them. "Instead of rejoicing in shame, they are only monks in appearance; but I know that if they possessed love they would be the happiest of men, happier than the old hermits, because they are daily exposed to the cross and contempt. But to-day there is no class of men more presumptuous than they."[2]

At the same time, however, he blames the religious who are too zealous for his liking, saying: "they are desirous of imitating the works of the Saints and are proud of their Founders and Fathers; but this is merely trumpery, because they wish to do the same great works themselves and yet neglect the spirit; they are like the Thomists and Scotists and the other sects, who defend the writings and words of their pet authors without cultivating the spirit, yea rather stifling it . . . but they are hypocrites, as Saints they are not holy, as righteous they are anything but righteous, and, while ostensibly performing good works, they, in fact, do nothing."[3]

And what sort of works do the religious perform? "In the same way that nowadays all workmen are as lazy as though they were asleep all day, so religious and priests sleep at their prayer from laziness, both spiritually and corporally; they do everything with the utmost indolence . . . this fault is so widespread that there is hardly one who is free from it."[4] "Now," he exclaims passionately, speaking of the monks and clergy, "almost all follow their vocation against their will and without any love for it." "How many there are who would gladly let everything go, ceremonies, prayers, rules and all, if the Pope would only dispense from them, as indeed he could." "We ought to perform these things willingly and gladly, not from fear of remorse of conscience, or of punishment, or from the hope of reward and honour. But supposing it were left free to each one to fast, pray, obey, go to church, etc., I believe that in one year everything would be at an end, all the churches empty and the altars forsaken."[5] He does not remember that shortly before he had been complaining that outward observances were taken too seriously so that they were looked upon as necessary means of salvation ("*sine his non esse salutem*"), that "the whole of religion was made to consist in their fulfilment to the neglect of the actual commandments of God, of faith and love," and that the

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 317.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 318.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 165 f.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 286.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 320.

"lower classes observe them under the impression that their eternal salvation depends upon them."[1] These complaints, too, he had redoubled when speaking of the religious.

According to the testimony of the religious and theological literature of that day, the monastic Orders were better instructed in the meaning and importance of outward observances than Luther here assumes. Expounders of the Rules and ascetical writers speak an altogether different language. In the monasteries the distinction between the observances which were enjoined under pain of grievous sin and were, therefore, under no circumstances to be omitted, and such as were binding under the Rule but not under pain of sin, was well understood, and a third category was allowed, viz. such as were undertaken voluntarily, for instance, the construction of churches, or their adornment. It was also known, and that not only in religious houses—for the popular manuals of that day set it forth clearly—that for an action to be good the motive of perfect love, which Luther represented as indispensable,[2] was not requisite, but that other religious motives, such as the fear of punishment of sin, were sufficient though it was, indeed, desirable to rise to a higher level. Above all, it was well known that the disinclination towards what is good, which springs from man's sensual nature like the temptation to indolence which still held sway even in religious, are not sin but may be made the subject of a meritorious struggle.

The formalism which it is true was widely prevalent in the religious life at that time was due not so much to a faulty conception of the religious state as to the inadequate fulfilment of its obligations and its ideals. This deterioration was not likely to be remedied by the application of the mistaken idea which Luther advocated, namely, that not the slightest trace of human weakness must be allowed to enter into the performance of good works, otherwise they became utterly worthless. His stipulation that everything must be done from the highest "*spiritus internus*," could only be the result of his extravagant mysticism. The Rules of no Order, not even that of the Augustinians, went so far as this. Yet the Rule of Luther's Augustinian Congregation did not seek a merely outward, Pharisaical carrying out of its regulations, but a life where the duties of the religious state were performed in accordance with the inward spirit of the Order.

Luther's master, the Augustinian Johann Paltz, emphasises this spirit very strongly in the instructions which he issued for the preservation of the true ideals of the Order.

"Love," he there says, "pays more heed to the inward than to the outward, but the spirit of the world mocks at what is inward and sets great value on what is outward" He opposed the principles tending to formalism and the deterioration of

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 316 f.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 317: "*Curandum, ut* [*vota*] *eadem charitate solvantur, qua sunt promissa, sine qua solvi non possunt. . . . Ideo apostatæ sunt multi, et non videntur.*"

the religious life and shows himself to be imbued with a true and deep appreciation of his profession. He entitles that portion of his treatise directed against deviations from the Rule: "Concerning the wild beasts who lay waste the religious life." He writes with so much feeling and in so vivid a manner that the reader of to-day almost fancies that he must have foreseen the approaching storm and the destruction of his Congregation. He scourges those who allow themselves to be led away by the appearance of what is good ("*sub specie boni*"), who introduce new roads to perfection according to their own ideas and require men to do what lies beyond them; they thus endanger the carrying out of the ordinary good works and practices of the religious life which all were able to perform. This, he says, was a temptation of the enemy from the beginning, who seduced such innovators to rely upon their own ideas and to consider themselves alone as good, wise and enlightened. "If the Babylonians [this is the name he gives to the instigators of such disturbances] force their way into the Order and if they obtain the upper hand, that will be the end of discipline, or at least it will be undermined; but if the spirits of Jerusalem [the city of Peace] retain the mastery, then the religious life will flourish and its development will not be hindered by certain defects which are, as a matter of fact, unavoidable in this life." These words are found in a book written by the clear-sighted and zealous Augustinian and published at Erfurt the year before Luther begged for admittance at the gate of the Augustinian monastery of that town.[1] The monk of liberal views was already on the point of becoming to his Order one of the "Babylonians" above referred to.

Luther wished to introduce into the religious life the confused ideas begotten of his mysticism, at the expense of the observances which all were bound to fulfil. In this connection it should not be forgotten that Tauler, the teacher whom Luther so much admired, had shown that religious obedience if exercised in the right spirit was capable, by the observance of the Rule in small matters, of leading to greater perfection than could be arrived at by the performance of great works or by contemplation when these were self-chosen. Luther must have been acquainted with the instructive story which Tauler relates and which was often told in conventual houses, of the Child Jesus and the nun. The Divine Child appears to her during her meditation, but, on being suddenly called away to perform some allotted task and obeying the summons, as a reward she finds on her return the Divine Child wearing a still more benign and friendly countenance, and her visitor is also at pains to point out to her that the humble task for which she had left Him, pleases Him better than the meditation in which she had been engaged when He first appeared to her.[2]

[1] "Celifodina," Supplementum, Erfordiæ, 1504, fol. L 3 *seq.*, M. 1′ *seq.*

[2] Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 283.

Teachers of Tauler's stamp inculcated on monks and laymen alike the highest esteem for small and insignificant tasks when performed in compliance with obedience to the duties of one's state, whatever it might be. It was unfair to the religious life and at the same time to true Christian mysticism when Luther at a later date, after his estrangement from the Order, in emphasising the works which please God in the secular life, saw fit to speak as though this view had hitherto been unknown.

Tauler had summed up the doctrine already well known in earlier ages in the beautiful words: "When the most trivial work is performed in real and simple obedience, such a work of an obedient man is nobler and better and more pleasing to God and is more profitable and meritorious than all the great works which he may do here below of his own choice."[1] Every artisan and peasant is able, according to Tauler, to serve God in perfect love in his humble calling; he need not neglect his work to tread the paths of sublime charity and lofty prayer. The mystic illustrates this also by a little anecdote: "I know one who is a very great friend of God and who has been all his days a farm-labourer, for more than two score years. He once asked our Lord whether he should leave his calling and go and sit in the churches. But the Lord said No, and that he was to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow and thus honour His true and noble Blood. Every man must choose some suitable time by day or by night during which he may go to the root of things, each one as best he can."[2]

Luther, during the time of his crisis, was not only a monk of dangerously wide views, but he was also inclined to take liberties in practice.

There is a great dearth of information with regard to the way in which Luther practised at that time the virtues of the religious life, and from his own statements we do not learn much. He complains, in 1516, to his friend Leiffer, the Erfurt Augustinian: "I am sure and know from my own experience, from yours too, and, in fact, from the general experience of all whom I have seen troubled, that it is merely the false wisdom of our own ideas which is the origin and root of our disquietude. For our eye is evil, and, to speak only of myself, into what painful misery has it brought me and still continues to bring me."[3]

Luther, whose capacity for work was enormous, flung himself into the employments which pressed upon him. He reserved little time for self-examination and for cultivating his spiritual life. In addition to his lectures, his

[1] Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 283. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] April 15, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 31.

studies, the direction of the younger monks, his sermons, whether at the monastery or in the parish church, and the heavy correspondence which devolved on him as Vicar, he also undertook various other voluntary labours. Frequently he had several sermons to preach on the same day, and with his correspondence he was scarcely able to cope. This was merely a prelude to what was to come. During the first years after his public apostasy he himself kept four printing presses at work, and besides this had a vast amount of other business to attend to. His powers of work were indeed amazing.

In 1516 in a letter he tells his friend Lang of his engagements. "I really ought to have two secretaries or chancellors. I do hardly anything all day but write letters. . . . I am at the same time preacher to the monastery, have to preach in the refectory and am even expected to preach daily in the parish church. I am Regent of the Studium [i.e. of the younger monks] and Vicar, that is to say Prior eleven times over [i.e. of the eleven houses under his supervision]; I have to provide for the delivery of fish from the Leitzkau pond and to manage the litigation of the Herzberg fellows [the monks] at Torgau; I am lecturing on Paul, compiling an exposition of the Psalter and, as I said before, writing letters most of the time."

"It is seldom," he adds, "that I have time for the recitation of the Divine Office or to celebrate [Mass], and then, too, I have my peculiar temptations from the flesh, the world and the devil."[1]

Thus at the time he was constantly omitting Office in Choir, the Breviary and the celebration of Mass, or performing these sacred duties in the greatest haste in order to get back to his business. We must dwell a little on this confession, as it represents the only definite information we have with regard to his spiritual life. If, as he says, he had strong temptations to bewail, it should have been his first care to strengthen his soul by spiritual exercises and to implore God's assistance in the Holy Mass and by diligence in Choir. Daily celebration of Mass had been earnestly recommended by teachers of the spiritual life to all priests, more particularly to those belonging to religious Orders. The punctual recitation of the canonical Hours, i.e. of the

[1] October 26, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 66 f.

Breviary, was enjoined as a most serious duty not merely by the laws of the Church, but also by the constitutions of the Augustine Congregation. The latter declared that no excuse could be alleged for the omission, and that whoever neglected the canonical Hours was to be considered as a schismatic. It is incomprehensible how Luther could dispense himself from both these obligations by alleging his want of time as, according to his Rule, spiritual exercises, especially in the case of a Superior, took precedence of all other duties, and it was for him to give an example to others in the punctual performance of the same.

There was probably another reason for his omitting to celebrate Mass.

He felt a repugnance for the Holy Sacrifice, perhaps on account of his frequent fits of anxiety. He says, at a later date, that he never took pleasure in saying Mass when a monk; this statement, however, cannot be taken to include the very earliest period of his priestly life, when the good effects of his novitiate were still apparent, for one reason because this would not agree with the enthusiasm of his letter of invitation to his first Mass.

Religious services generally, he says in 1515–16 to the young monks, with a boldness which he takes little pains to conceal, "are in fact to-day more a hindrance than a help" to true piety. Speaking of the manner of their performance he says with manifest exaggeration, that it is such as to be no longer prayer. "We only insult God more when we recite them. . . . We acquire a false security of conscience as though we had really prayed, and that is a terrible danger!"[1] Then he goes on to explain "Almost all follow their calling at the present day with distaste and without love, and those who are zealous place their trust in it and merely crucify their conscience." He speaks of the "superstitious exercises of piety" which are performed from gross ignorance, and sets up as the ideal, that each one should be at liberty to decide what he will undertake in the way of priestly or monastic observances, among which he enumerates expressly "celibacy, the tonsure, the habit and the recitation of the Breviary."[2] We see from this that he was not much attached even to the actual obligations of his profession, and we may fairly surmise that such a disposition had not come upon him suddenly; these were rather the moral accompaniments of the change in his theological views and really date from an earlier period. We can also recognise in them the practical results of his strong opposition to the Observantines of the Order, which

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 288. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 319, 320.

grew into an antagonism to all zeal in the religious life and in the service of God, and even to the observance of the duties, great or small, of one's state of life.

With his mystical idealism he demands, on the other hand, what is contrary to reason and impossible of attainment. Prayer, according to him, if rightly performed, is the "most strenuous work and calls for the greatest energy"; "the spirit must be raised to God by the employment of constant violence"; this must be done "with fear and trembling," because the biblical precept says: "work out your salvation with fear and trembling"; in short, it is, he declares, "the most difficult and most tedious affair" ("*difficillima et tædiosissima*").[1] Only then is it not so "when the Spirit of God takes us beneath His wings and carries us, or when misfortune forces us to pray from our hearts."

He can describe graphically the lukewarmness and distractions which accompany the recitation of the Divine Office, and can do so from experience if we may trust what he says in 1535 of himself: "I have in my day spent much time in the recitation of the canonical Hours, and often the Psalm or Hour was ended before I knew whether I was at the beginning or in the middle of it."[2]

The ironical description which he gives in 1516 of those who pray with a good intention runs as follows:[3] "They form their good intention and make a virtue of necessity. But the devil laughs at them behind their backs and says: 'put on your best clothes, Kitty, we are going to have company.'[4] They get up and go into the choir and say to themselves [under the impression that they are doing something praiseworthy]: 'See, little owl, how fine you are, surely you are growing peacock's feathers!'[5] But I know you are like the ass in the fable, otherwise I should have taken you for lions, you roar so; but though you have got into a lion's skin, I know you by your ears! Soon, whilst they are praying, weariness comes over them, they count up the pages still to be gone through, and look at the number of verses to see if they are nearly at the end. Then they console themselves [for their tepidity] with their Scotus, who teaches that a virtual intention suffices and an actual intention is unnecessary. But the devil says to them: 'excellent, quite right, be at peace and secure!' Thus we become," so the amusing description concludes, "a laughing-stock to our enemy."

He thinks he has found a way out of the dualism which formerly tormented him, and has become more independent. But what has he found to replace it? Merely fallacies, the inadequacy and inconsistency of which are hidden from him by his egotism and self-deception. "This good intention," he says of the teaching of Scotus—which was perfectly correct, though liable to be misunderstood, as it certainly was by Luther—"is not so easy

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 290. [2] Erl. ed., 23, p. 222.
[3] "Schol. Rom.," p. 321.
[4] These words are given in German in the Latin text.
[5] Also in German.

and under our own control, as Scotus would have it to our undoing; as though we possessed free will to make good intentions whenever we wish! That is a very dangerous and widespread fallacy, which leads us to carelessness and to snore in false security." We must, on the contrary, he continues, prostrate in our cell, implore this intention of God's mercy with all our might and wait for it, instead of presumptuously producing it from within ourselves; and in the same way after doing any good works we must not examine whether we have acted wickedly by deed or omission ("*neque quid mali fecimus aut omisimus*"), but with what interior fervour and gladness of heart we have performed the action.[1]

As the recitation of the Hours in the monastery was one of the duties of the day in the same way as the recitation of the Breviary and Office in Choir is to-day, i.e. an obligation which expired when the day was over, it is rather surprising to hear it said of Luther that, at a later period, "after the rise of the Evangel [i.e. actually during his conflict with the Church], he frequently shut himself up in his cell at the end of the week and recited, fasting, all the prayers he had omitted, until his head swam and he became for weeks incapable of working or hearing." This strange tale about Luther reads rather differently in Melanchthon's version which he reports having had from Luther himself: "At the commencement it was Luther's custom on the days on which he was not obliged to preach to spend a whole day in repeating the Hours seven times over [i.e. for the whole week], getting up at 2 a.m. for that purpose. But then Amsdorf said to him: 'If it is a sin to omit the Breviary, then you sinned when you omitted it. But if it is not a sin, then why torment yourself now?' Then when his work increased still more he threw away the Breviary."[2] The latter statement may indeed be true, as Luther himself says in his Table-Talk: "Our Lord God tore me away by force '*ab horis canonicis an.* 1520' [?] when I was already writing much." In this same passage he again mentions how he recited the whole of the Office for the seven days of the week on the Saturday and adds the historic comment, that, owing to his fatigue from the Saturday fast and consequent sleeplessness, they had been obliged to dose him with "Dr. Esch's haustum soporiferum."[3] It is therefore quite possible that his statements as to the circumstances under which

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 321 f.

[2] "Zeitschr. für Kirchengesch.," ed. Brieger, 4, 1886, p. 330 in the *Dicta Melanchthoniana*, given by O. Waltz. Cp. Mathesius, "Tischreden" (Kroker), p. 155, where Luther says, in June, 1540: "At the time when I was a monk I was so much occupied in lecturing, writing, singing, etc., that owing to my work I was unable to recite the canonical Hours. Therefore on Saturday I made up for what I had missed during the six days of the week, taking no meals and praying the whole day, but, nevertheless, I did not trouble about the sense of the words. Thus were we poor people tormented by the decrees of the Popes."

[3] Schlaginhaufen, "Aufzeichnungen," p. 6. Cp. "Coll.," ed. Bindseil, 1, p. 67, and "Tischreden," ed. Forstemann, 3, p. 236.

he dispensed himself from the Breviary may contain some truth; all the facts point to the violent though confused struggle going on in the young Monk's mind.

Yet Luther speaks ably enough in 1517 of the urgent necessity of spiritual exercises, more particularly meditation on the Scriptures, to which the recitation of the Office in Choir was an introduction: "As we are attacked by countless distractions from without, impeded by cares and engrossed by business, and as all this leads us away from purity of heart, only one remedy remains for us, viz. with great zeal to 'exhort each other' (Heb. iii. 13), rouse our slumbering spirit by the Word of God, reading the same continually, and hearing it as the Apostle exhorts." Not long after he is, however, compelled to write: "I know right well that I do not live in accordance with my teaching."[1]

The exertions which his feverish activity entailed avenged themselves on his health. He became so thin that one could count his ribs, as the saying is. His incessant inward anxieties also did their part in undermining his constitution.

The outward appearance of the Monk was specially remarkable on account of the brilliancy of his deep-set eyes, to which Pollich, his professor at the University of Wittenberg, had already drawn attention (p. 86). The impression which this remarkable look, which always remained with him, made on others, was very varied. His subsequent friends and followers found in his eyes something grand and noble, something of the eagle, while, on the other hand, some remarks made by his opponents on the uncanny effect of his magic glance will be mentioned later. Anger intensified this look, and the strange power which Luther exerted over those who opposed him, drew many under the spell of his influence and worked upon them like a kind of suggestion.[2]

Many remarked with concern on the youthful Luther's too great self-sufficiency.

His then pupil Johann Oldecop describes him as "a man of sense," but "proud by nature." "He began to be still more haughty," Oldecop observes, when speaking of the

[1] "*Scio quod non vivo quæ doceo.*" To Bishop Adolf of Merseburg, February 4, 1520, "Briefwechsel," 2, p. 312.

[2] Melanchthon said on one occasion, according to Waltz (see above, p. 278, n. 2), p. 326: "*Leo habet oculos χαροπούς* (bright-eyed), *Lutheri oculi sunt χαροποί, et habebant leonem in ascendente* (probably "*habebat*," viz. Luther in his Horoscope). *Et tales plerumque sunt ingeniosi* . . . They were brown eyes, "*circuit circulus gilvus.*"

incipient schism.[1] He will have it that at the University Luther had always shown himself quarrelsome and disputatious. Oldecop could never forget that Luther, his professor, never held a disputation which did not end in strife and quarrels.[2] Luther's close connection with Johann Lang, the Augustinian and rather free-thinking Humanist, was also remarked upon, he says. We know from other sources that Lang encouraged Luther in his peculiar ideas, especially in his mysticism and in his contempt for the theology of the schools.

3. Luther's Ultra-Spiritualism and calls for Reform. Is Self-improvement possible? Penance

It is clear from the above, that the passionate zeal for reform which inspired the Augustinian proceeded chiefly from his pseudo-mysticism. It would, however, be incorrect to attribute all this zeal simply to mysticism, but neither would it be in accordance with the facts of history were we to deny the connection between his repeated complaints and calls for reform and his spiritualistic ideas.

It may be worth while to listen here to what the youthful Luther had to say of the reforming notions which already inspired him, for it opens up a wide horizon against which his psychology stands out in clear relief. Plans so far-reaching can only have been the result of the exaggerated and one-sided spiritualistic point of view, from which he regarded the perversity of the world at large. The following passages show what were the motives which urged him on. He declared it to be the duty of ecclesiastical superiors to show more indulgence to those who scorn their position and "the rights and privileges of the Church," and this from the motive of mystical resignation; theologians ought to teach, in place of their traditional science, how we are "humbly to sigh after grace"; philosophy must for the future be silent because it is nothing but "the wisdom of

[1] Joh. Oldecop's "Chronik" (ed. K. Euling, Tübingen, 1891), pp. 36, 49. He says of Luther's friend Lang, whose lecture on the Epistle to Titus he had heard: "dat he ein hoifferdich monnik was und let sik vele bedunken," i.e. that he was a proud monk thinking not a little of himself.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 40. P. 17, of the Erfurt days: He spoke against everyone with a strange audacity and would give way to no one. P. 28: Martin was always wanting to be in the right and liked to pick a quarrel.

the flesh"; lay authorities, moreover, who now begin to see through our wickedness, ought to seize upon the temporalities of the Church in order that she may be set free to devote herself entirely to the interior Christian life. Luther's view of the position and actual character of the worldly powers at that time was absolutely untrue to life, and one that could have been cherished only by a mystic looking out on the world from the narrow walls of his cell. A strange self-sufficiency, of which he himself appears to have been utterly unaware, and which is therefore all the more curious, was at the root of these ideas.

Such a tone unmistakably pervades the projects of reform expressed not only in the Commentary on Romans, but also in his exposition of the Psalms; but a comparison of these two works shows the increased stress which Luther lays upon his own opinion in the later work, and the still greater inconsideration with which he rejects everything which clashes with his views, a fact which proves that Luther was progressing. In his Commentary on Romans he appeals formally to the "apostolic authority" of his Doctor's degree, when giving vent to the most unheard-of vituperation of the highest powers, ecclesiastical and lay. He declares it to be his duty to reprove what he finds amiss in all, and almost at the same moment denounces the bishops who defend the rights of the Church as "*Pharaonici, Sathanici, Behemotici*"; so convinced is he that their supposed abuse of power entitles him to reprove them.[1]

The language in which the mystic unhesitatingly passes the severest possible judgments could scarcely be stronger.

"We have fallen under a Jewish bondage . . . our preachers have concealed from the people the truth regarding the right way of worshipping God, and the Apostles must needs come again to preach to us."[2]

"When shall we at last listen to reason," he cries,[3] "and understand that we must spend our valuable time more profitably [than in the study of philosophy]? 'We are ignorant of what is necessary,' thus we should complain with Seneca, 'because we merely learn what is superfluous.' We remain ignorant of what might be of use to us while we busy ourselves with what is worse

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 301.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 317: "*Nunc omnes fere desipiunt* (this is about the Church's fasts) . . . *ut rursum* (*populus*) *apostolis indigeat ipsis, ut veram disceret pietatem.*"

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

than worthless."[1] He speaks thus because others were not alive to the state of things, or had not the courage to open their mouths: "Perhaps they would not be believed, but I have spent years in these studies, have seen and heard much and know that they are vain and perverse" ("*studium vanitatis et perditionis*"). Therefore let us rise and destroy them! "We must learn to know Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified. . . . Is it not a strange madness to praise and belaud philosophy, a doctrine which is merely the perverse wisdom of the flesh advocated by so-called wise men and theologians!"

"Those fools" who do not even know what grace is. . . . "Who can bear with their blasphemous ideas?" "They do not know what sin or remission of sin is." "Our theologians see sins only in works, and do not teach us how to change our minds and how to implore grace with humble sighing. . . . They make proud men, men who after due performance of their works look on themselves as righteous, and seek not to fight against their passions. That is the reason why Confession is of so little use in the Church and why backsliding occurs so frequently."[2]

His hatred for theology leads him to make the following false and bitter charges: "The Scholastics teach that it is only necessary to fulfil the law outwardly, in deed, not with the heart; they do not even show how this is to be done, and thus the faithful are left in the impossibility of doing good, because they will never be able to fulfil the commandments unless they do so with the heart. These teachers do not even stretch out a finger towards the fulfilment of the law, I mean, they do not make its fulfilment depend even in the slightest on the heart, but merely on outward acts. Hence they become vain and proud."[3] An esteemed Protestant historian of dogma, in a recent work, speaks of Luther's knowledge of Scholasticism as follows:

"Luther does not appear to have been acquainted with the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, more especially Thomas of Aquin. About this statement, which Denifle constantly repeats, there seems to me to be no doubt."[4]

The Wittenberg Professor makes use of scathing reproofs such as had never before been heard. A good deal of his criticism was justifiable, and he was certainly not wrong in applying it judiciously in his own special domain to much that had hitherto been accepted as true. It is refreshing to those engaged in historical research to note how he cuts himself adrift from the legends of mediæval hagiography, and how he writes on one occasion requesting Spalatin to copy out some particulars for him from Jerome's book which he might use for a sermon on St. Bartholomew, "for the fables and lies of the '*Catalogus*' and '*Legenda aurea*' make

[1] Seneca, Ep. 45, 4.

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 111. Here the term "Sawtheologen" occurs.

[3] Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 89.

[4] Fr. Loofs, "Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengesch.,"[4] 1906, p. 690. Cp. above, pp. 127 ff., 130 ff., etc., on Luther's ignorance of Scholasticism.

my gorge rise."[1] Criticism of ecclesiastical conditions was also quite permissible when made in the right way and in the proper quarters; examples of such criticism were not wanting among the saintly mediæval reformers, and they might have been acceptable to the authorities of the Church, or, at any rate, could not have been repudiated by them.

But when Luther is dealing with the faults of the clergy, secular or regular, he looks at everything with a jaundiced eye as being saturated with arrogance, avarice and every vice, and seems to fancy all have become traitors to God's cause. His love of exaggeration and his want of charity override everything, nor do these faults disappear with advancing years, but become still more marked. Never was there an eye more keen to detect the faults of others, never a tongue more ready to amplify them. And yet he, who does not scruple to support his fierce and passionate denunciations by the coarsest and most unfair generalisations, is himself the first to admit in his Commentary on Romans that: "There are fools who put the fault they have to find with a priest or religious to the account of all and then abuse them all with bitterness, forgetting that they themselves are full of imperfections."[2]

He announces to his hearers in 1516 that, "to-day the clergy are enveloped in thick darkness"; "it troubles no one that all the vices prevail among the faithful, pride, impurity, avarice, quarrelling, anger, ingratitude" and every other vice; "these things you may do as much as you like so long as you respect the rights and liberties of the Church! but if you but touch these, then you are no longer a true son and friend of the Church." The clergy, he continues, have received many possessions and liberties from the secular princes, but now they are quarrelling with their patrons and insisting on their exemptions: "Bad, godless men strut about with the gifts of their benefactors and think they are doing enough when they mutter a few prayers on their behalf," "and yet Paul when describing the priest and his duties never even mentioned prayer [!]. But what he did mention, that no one complies with to-day. . . . They are priests only in appearance. . . . Where do you find one who carries out the intention of the Founders? Therefore they deserve that what they have received [from the princes] should be taken away from them again."[3]

"As a matter of fact," the mystic continues, quite manifestly conveying a hint to the secular authorities, "it were better, and assuredly safer, if the temporalities of the clergy were placed under the control of the worldly authorities . . . then they would at least be obliged to stand in awe of others and would be more cautious in all matters."

"Up to now the laity have been too unlettered, and from ignorance have allowed themselves to be led, though full of complaints and bitterness against the clergy. But now they

[1] August 24, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 47.
[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 335. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 300.

are beginning to be aware of the secret of our iniquity ('*nosse mysteria iniquitatis nostræ*') and to examine into our duties. . . . In addition to this, it seems to me that the secular authorities fulfil their obligations better than our ecclesiastical rulers. They rigorously punish theft and murder, at least when the lawyers do not intervene with their artfulness. The Church authorities, on the other hand, only proceed against those who infringe their liberties, possessions and rights, and are filled with nothing but pomp, avarice, immorality and disputatiousness." In the course of this strong outburst, which gives us an insight into the working of his mind, he goes on to brand the higher clergy as "whited sepulchres" and as the "most godless breakers of the law," who purposely promote only stupid fellows to the priesthood, or even to the most exalted offices. Here the intemperance of his language is already that of his later days, though a year was yet to elapse before he published his Indulgence theses.

Strictures on the use of Indulgences occur, however, among his criticisms dating from this time. He attacks the "unlearned preachers" whose promises of Indulgences in return for donations for the building of churches, or similar pious objects, attract the people, though the latter are "altogether careless about fulfilling the duties of their calling." He lays to the charge of the Pope and the Bishops not merely the real abuses in the preaching of Indulgences—as though they had been aware of them all—but (also the making of Indulgences to depend on offerings;) all the Bishops are, however, on the path to hell, and intent on seducing the people from the true service of God.[1]

He had, as we have seen, praised the worldly authorities at the expense of the ecclesiastical dignitaries, and now we find him introducing into his theological lectures a strange eulogy of Frederick, his Elector: "You, Prince Frederick, are yet to be guided by a good angel, therefore be on the watch. How greatly have you already been tried by injustice, and how rightly might you have taken up arms! You have suffered, you remained peaceable. I wonder, were you calling to mind your sins, and wishing thereby to confess them and do penance?" To this the mystic himself prudently replies: "I know not," and adds: "Perhaps it was merely the fear of possibly getting the worse."[2] The exhortations he sees fit to address to his sovereign are directed not so much against selfishness or other faults, but rather against his supposed excessive piety; he is blamed for frequently postponing audiences on the plea that he must be present at prayers or Divine Service, and yet, Luther thinks, "we ought to be resigned and indifferent to go wherever the Lord calls us and not attach ourselves obstinately to anything";[3] another complaint was that the Elector was too much given to imitating the Bishop in the collecting of relics. The Elector's love for rare relics was indeed notorious, and, as a matter of fact, Luther himself was of service to the Elector in this very matter at the time when Staupitz was negotiating for him at St. Ursula's

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 243. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 272. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

in Cologne. We hear of this in a letter, in which Luther also sends his thanks to the Elector for his present of a new cowl (*cucullus*) "of really princely cloth."[1]

When, after his second course of lectures on the Psalms, Luther commenced the publishing of an amended edition he dedicated this, his first effort in biblical exegesis, to the Elector, with a preface in the form of a panegyric couched in the most fulsome language.[2] The Elector, Luther tells him, possessed all the qualities of a good ruler in no common degree; his love of learning not only rendered him immortal himself, but conferred this quality on all those who were permitted to belaud him. Under his rule "pure theology triumphed"; secular rulers had, by promoting learning, taken precedence of spiritual dignitaries, "for the Church's exuberant riches and her powerful influence did not avail her much."[3] Would that there were other such temporal princes as Frederick, who, as Staupitz had said, was able to discourse on Holy Scripture as learnedly and acutely as the Pope himself ("*vel sanctissimum et summum pontificem deceret*"); whose utterance bore witness to the "sagacity of his judgment," filled Luther with love for such a sovereign and made him strong in the defence of Holy Scripture against all Scotists, Thomists, Albertists and Moderns (Nominalists). It was only on account of his opponents, who scoffed at the Bible and wished to replace God's Word by their own, that he had been induced to quit his beloved solitude and retirement; indeed, he felt quite unworthy to wear the Doctor's cap which the Prince had so kindly bought for him,[4] and merely did so from obedience; the Prince had been more careful for him than he was for himself, had upheld him in his professorship and not allowed him to suffer expulsion, however much he (Luther) had desired to suffer this at the hands of his enemies.

The clever eulogist appears soon to have gained for himself great favour at Court. Barely two months after the letter spoken of, he requests of the sovereign, in the name of his priory, permission "for the monks to build a chamber outside the walls in the moat." The intention was to erect a privy in the town moat for the use of the monastery, which was situated close to the walls. At the same time he begs that a black *cappa* (habit) which had been promised him in 1516 or 1517 might now be bestowed upon him, and refers to his dedication of the Psalter as perhaps deserving some such reward; he also asks the Prince to include in his gift a white cloak, which he might perchance have merited by the "Apostle," i.e. by his Commentary on the

[1] To Spalatin, December 14, 1516, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 73.

[2] The *Operationes in Psalmos* with the letter of May 27, 1519, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 480 ff.

[3] "*Adeo infeliciter cessit opulentia et potentatus ecclesiæ.*" *Ibid.*, p. 482.

[4] In "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 9, Luther's receipt. See *ibid.*, p. 10, n. 2, for the discreditable and incorrect tales concerning Luther, which grew up around this gift.

Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians, upon which he was at that time engaged.[1]

Such little touches often reveal the spiritual atmosphere in which a man moves, and by which he is influenced, quite as well as more important matters.

The frightful accusations which Luther brings forward in his Commentary on Romans against the state of morals in Rome belong to a somewhat earlier period; their tone is such as to lead one to fear the worst for the author's submission to the highest authorities in the Church. The language St. Bernard employed, though he too reproved the immorality of the Papal residence, is quite different in tone from the arrogant words of the Wittenberg Doctor; in the former the most grievous reproofs are mitigated by the warm esteem the saint displays for authority as such, and by filial affection for the Church; in the latter there is nothing but bitterness. Such outbursts of spite confirm our previous observations concerning the results of Luther's journey to Rome. His indignation with what he had seen or heard during his visit to Rome of the moral conditions under Alexander VI and Julius II became gradually more apparent.

"At Rome," he exclaims, "they no longer recognise any restrictions on their liberty, everything is set aside by means of dispensations. They have arrogated to themselves freedom of the flesh in every particular."[2]

"Rome to-day has sunk back to its old heathen state," where, as Paul says, licentiousness prevailed.[3]

"To-day Rome drags the whole world with her into the puddle; she far exceeds in unbridled luxury even ancient Rome, and stands in even greater need of apostolic messengers from God than she did at the beginning. My only hope is that these may come to her in friendly guise and not to execute stern justice."[4]

"We may well be amazed at the thick darkness of these times." "It matters nothing to the Church authorities though you be steeped in all the vices on the list drawn up by Paul (2 Tim. iii. 2 ff.); the sins may cry to Heaven for vengeance, but that does not matter, you are still looked

[1] Letter of middle of May, 1519, "Werke," Erl. ed., 53, p. 9. ("Briefwechsel," 2, p. 35.)

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 319. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 310. [4] *Ibid.*

upon as the most devout of Christians so long as you respect the rights and liberties of the Church."[1] "We have mere phantom priests, who are well supported by phantom revenues. The priests are such only in name."[2] "Those who ought to keep order are themselves the most godless transgressors,"[3] etc.

Pride, everywhere, is, he thinks, the main cause of the corruption of the times. The humility of Christ is forgotten, and each one wants to exalt himself and amend others instead of himself.

The worst kind of pride, he constantly declares, is that which exalts its own good works in the sight of God. This spiritual overbearing is the reason why the world is filled with the heresy of the Pelagians; the sovereign efficacy of grace is not recognised.[4] Almost the whole Church is overturned because men have put their trust in the deceptive doctrines of the Schoolmen, which are opposed to grace, "for owing to this, all commit sin with impunity . . . and have lost all sense of fear."[5]

In 1514 we hear Luther asserting, that of the three vices, sensuality, anger and pride, pride was the most difficult to overcome, a warning which his own experience had confirmed all too surely. "This vice," he complains, "arises even from victory over the other vices."[6] One wonders whether he is speaking here from personal experience.

We may ask a similar question with regard to the two other faults mentioned by him, anger and sensuality. Putting aside anger, the effects of which upon himself he frequently admits, we find that he also gives an answer concerning the third temptation. He writes in 1519 of the experiences of his earlier years with regard to sensuality: "It is a shameful temptation, I have had experience of it. You yourselves are, I fancy, not ignorant of it. Oh, I know it well, when the devil comes and tempts us and excites the flesh. Therefore let a man consider well and prove himself whether he is able to live in chastity, for when one is on heat, I know well what it is, and when temptation then comes upon a man he is already blind," etc.[7]

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 298. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 299. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 309.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 322 f. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 323.
[6] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 486. Cp. p. 207. Commentary on Psalms.
[7] From the sermon on married life, 1519, 1 ed., "Werke" Weim. ed., 9, p. 213.

In his later years he also refers to the "very numerous temptations" which he underwent at the monastery, and of which he complained to his confessor; the more he fought against them, the stronger they became.[1]

What he says of falling into sin is very instructive from the psychological point of view. It serves as a stepping-stone to his views on penance.

"Even to-day," he writes in his Commentary on Romans where he deals with hardened sinners, "God allows men to be tempted by the devil, the world and the flesh until they are in despair, choosing thus to humble His elect and lead them to put their trust in Him alone without presuming upon their own will and works. Yet He often, especially in our day, incites the devil to plunge His elect into dreadful sins beneath which they languish, or at least allows the devil ever to hinder their good resolutions, making them do the contrary of what they wish to do, so that it becomes plain to them that it is not they who will or perform what is good. And yet by means of all this God leads them against their expectations [to His grace] and sets them free while they are sighing because they desire and do so much that is evil, and are unable to desire and do the good they would. Yea, it is thus that God manifests His strength and that His name is magnified over the whole earth."[2] This passage is scored in the margin of the original MS. Was it his intention to include himself among those who are always hindered by the devil from doing what is good, or even among those whom he plunges into dreadful sins, who despair and are then at last led by God to His grace and become promoters of the glory of His name? A certain resemblance which this description bears to other passages in which he recounts his temptations, despair and supposed deliverance and election makes this seem possible, though it is by no means certain.

We are more inclined to apply to him a remarkable description, which he gives in another passage of the Commentary on Romans, of the devil's action on a man whom he wishes to lead astray. Man's fall under the bondage of sin and his resuscitation by grace engage his attention often and with a singular intensity, but generally speaking he makes no mention of contrition or satisfaction, but only of a covering over with the righteousness of Christ. The description in question, given in eloquent language, is based on the well-known passage in Romans iii. 28: "We account a man to be justified by faith without the works of the law." This is the verse in which Luther later, in his translation, interpolated the word "alone" ("by faith alone"), but on which he does not as yet bestow any particular attention. On the contrary, he commences his exposition of this text with the

[1] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 19, p. 100.

[2] P. 228 Where he here speaks of "sin," it is more probable that he means concupiscence.

statement: "Righteousness must, indeed, be sought by works, but these are not the works of the law because they are performed by grace and in faith."[1]

He goes on to mention four classes of men who are led away by the devil in their esteem and practice of works.[2] The first he draws away from all good works and entangles in manifest sin. The second, who think themselves righteous, he makes tepid and careless. The third, also righteous in their own eyes, he renders over-zealous and superstitious, so that they set themselves up as a class apart and despise others; they have been mentioned over and over again in the above pages, in recounting his warfare with the Observants, the "Spirituals," the proud self-righteous, etc.

The fourth and last class might possibly include himself.

"The fourth class consists of those who, at the instigation of the devil, desire to be free from any sin, pure and holy. But as they, nevertheless, feel that they commit sin and that all they do is tainted with evil, the devil terrifies them to such an extent with fear of the judgments of God and scruples of conscience that they almost despair. He is acquainted with each one's disposition and tempts him accordingly. As they are zealous in the pursuit of righteousness the devil is unable to turn them aside from it so readily. Therefore he sets himself to fill them with enthusiasm, so that they wish to free themselves too speedily from all trace of concupiscence. This they are unable to do, and consequently he succeeds in making them sad, downcast and faint-hearted, yea, even in causing them unendurable anxiety of conscience and despair."

When prescribing the remedy, he begins to use the first person plural. "Therefore there is nothing for us to do but to make the best of things and to remain in sin. We must sigh to be set free, hoping in God's mercy. When a man desires to be cured he may, if in too great a hurry, have a worse relapse. His cure can only take place slowly and many weaknesses must be borne with during convalescence. It is enough that sin be displeasing, though it cannot be altogether expelled. For Christ bears everything, if only it is displeasing to us; His are the sins not ours, and, here below, His righteousness is our property."

We may take that portion of the description where the first person is used as an account of his own state. Here he is describing his own practice. This passage, which in itself admits of a good interpretation and might be made use of by a Catholic ascetic, must be read in connection with Luther's doctrine that concupiscence is sin. Looking at it in this light, the sense in which he understands displeasure with sin becomes clear, also why, in view of the ineradicable nature of concupiscence, he is willing to console himself

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p 100. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

with the idea that "Christ bears it all." His dislike of concupiscence is entirely different from contrition for sin. The young Monk frequently felt himself oppressed by an aversion for concupiscence, but of contrition for sin he scarcely ever speaks, or only in such a way as to raise serious doubts with regard to his idea of it and the manner in which he personally manifested it, as the passages about to be quoted will show. The practice of making Christ's righteousness our own, saying, "His are the sins," etc., he does not recommend merely in the case of concupiscence, but also in that of actual sins; it should, however, be noted that the latter may quite well be displeasing to us without there being any contrition in the theological sense, particularly without there being perfect contrition.

Luther is here describing the remedy which he himself applies in place of real penance, wholesome contrition and compunction. It is to replace all the good resolutions which strengthen and fortify the will, and all penitential works done in satisfaction for the guilt of sin, and this remedy he begins to recommend to others.

His contempt for good works, for zeal in the religious life and for any efforts at overcoming self encourage him in these views. His new ideas as to man's inability to do anything that is good, as to his want of free will to fight against concupiscence and the sovereign efficacy of grace and absolute predestination, all incline him to the easy road of imputation; finally, he caps his system by persuading himself that only by his new discoveries, which, moreover, are borne out by St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, can Christ receive the honour which is His due and His Gospel come into its rights. Such was Luther's train of thought.

The characteristic position which Luther assumed in his early days with regard to penance and the motive of fear, must be more closely examined in order to complete the above account.

The Monk frankly admits, not once but often, that inward contrition for sin was something foreign, almost unknown, to him. The statements he makes concerning his confessions weigh heavily in the scale when we come to consider the question of his spiritual life.

In a passage of his Commentary on the Psalms where he would in the ordinary course have been obliged to speak of contrition

he refrains from doing so on the plea that he has had no experience of it, and refers his hearers to the Confessions of St. Augustine.[1]

He admits in his Commentary on Romans that he had struggled with himself ("*ita mecum pugnavi*") because he could not believe that contrition and confession really cleansed him from sin, as he had always been conscious of sin, viz. concupiscence, still continuing within him.[2]

In 1518 he writes: because the evil inclination to sin always remains in man "there are none, or at least very few, in the whole world who have perfect contrition, and I certainly admit this in my own case."[3]

According to the statements he made in later years concerning his fruitless attempts to awaken contrition within himself, and concerning his relations with his confessor, he must have taken the wrong road at an early period in his religious life; the more earnestly he sought to conceive contrition, he says, the greater was his trouble of mind and remorse of conscience. "I was unable to accept ('*non poteram admittere*') the absolutions and consolations of my confessors, for I thought to myself, who knows whether I can put faith in these words of comfort?"[4] This sentence occurs in the passage mentioned above, where he states how he had been tranquilised by the repeated exhortations of his preceptor to recall God's command and cultivate the virtue of hope.[5] It is true he here ascribes the original cause of his trouble of mind to the teaching he had received "in the schools, which had such a bad effect on him that he could not endure to hear the word joy mentioned." It is clear that he is here speaking with an ulterior purpose, namely, with a view to supporting his polemic against the Catholic Church ("*meo exemplo et periculo moniti discite!*"). But it is highly probable that his idea of concupiscence as sin tended to confuse his conception of contrition, and made confession and contrition painful to him.

At a later date he opposed the Catholic doctrine of contrition on account of his aversion to the motive of fear of the judgments of God.

[1] See above, p. 72, n. 2.

[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 109. Cp. above, p. 92, n. 1.

[3] "Sermo de pœnitentia," "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 321.

[4] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 19, p. 100. Cp. his statement in his first answer to Prierias that zeal for sacramental penance could only endure by a miracle, "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 649 f. On the other hand, he speaks of experiences he had had on the reception of grace, seemingly referring to his confessions: "*Probavi sæpius infusionem gratiæ fieri cum magna animi concussione.*" This appears in the *Assertio omnium articulorum* (1520). "Werke," Weim. ed., 7, p. 91 ff. "Opp. Lat. var.," 5, p. 154. According to the teaching of all ascetics the reception of grace imparts peace and joy in God. Luther, however, infers from his abnormal feelings: "*Sis ergo certus: simul dum homo conteritur, simul gratia infunditur, et in medio terrore diligit iustitiam, si vere pœnitet.*" Weim. ed., 7, p. 117; "Opp. Lat. var.," 5, p. 189.

[5] See above, p. 10.

The Church had always taught that perfect contrition was that which proceeded from a real love of God, but that contrition from a holy fear of God was salutary because it involved a turning away from sin and a beginning of love. Luther, however, at the very commencement of his new teaching, was at pains to exclude fear as an inspiring motive. He was determined to weed it out of the religious life as unworthy of the service of God, quite unmindful of the fact that it was expressly recommended by reason, by the Fathers of the Church and by the very words of the Bible.

He says, for instance, in 1518 in his sermon on the Ten Commandments, that in contrition for sin no place is to be assigned to fear. The contrition which must be aroused is, he says, to proceed from love alone, because that which is based on fear is always outward, hypocritical and not lasting.[1]

In an earlier sermon he mentions the two kinds of contrition, namely, that which, according to him, is the only true one, "out of love of justice and of punishment," or which, in other words, hates sin from the love of God, and that which springs from fear, which he says is artificial and not real, and to which he gives the nickname "gallows grief." The latter, he says, does not make us abhor sin, but merely the punishment of sin, and were there no punishment for sin it would at once cease.[2] Hence he misapprehends the nature of imperfect contrition, for this in reality does not desire a return to sin.

He begins his tract on Penance in 1518 with the assertion, that contrition from the motive of fear makes a man a still greater sinner, because it does not detach the will from sin, and because the will would return to sin so soon as there was no punishment to be feared.[3] This contrition, he says, his opponents among the theologians defend; they could not understand that penance is sweet and that this sweetness leads to an abhorrence and hatred of sin.[4]

As he had banished contrition from a motive of fear, he should have laid all the more stress upon that which springs from love. But here he was met by a difficulty, namely, that concupiscence still exists in man and draws him towards sin, or rather, according to Luther's ideas, of itself makes him a real sinner, so that no actual turning away from sin can take place in the heart. What then was to be done? "You must," he says, "cast yourself by prayer into God's hands so that He may account your contrition as real and true." "Christ will supply from His own

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 466: "*Contritio de timore inferni et peccati turpitudine est literalis, ficta et brevi durans, quia non radicata amore, sed incussa timore tantum.*"

[2] Sermon of October 31, 1516, "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p 99.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 319. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 320.

what is wanting in yours."[1] Thus we again arrive at imputation, at a mere outward covering over of the defect of inward change.

If he looked upon penance and confession in this light, then, indeed, they were not of a nature to satisfy and tranquilise him.[2] We may, however, remark that in the time of his great crisis an earnest and devout fear of God the Judge would have availed him more than all his extravagant mysticism with its tendency to cast off the bonds of fear and abolish the keeping of the law.

We shall not be wrong if we assume that the frequent states of terror—of which the cause lay in his temperament rather than in his will—had their part in his aversion to fear and to the idea of God's judgment. He felt himself impelled to escape at any cost from their dominion.

Other passages which Luther wrote at a later date on fear and contrition read rather differently and seem to advocate fear as a motive. We see thereby how hard he found it to cut himself adrift from the natural and correct view taught by theology. He declares, for instance, later, with great emphasis, that "true penance begins with the fear and the judgment of God."[3]

He betrays in this, as in other points, his confusion and inconsequence.[4]

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 321: "*Oratio et agnitio atque confessio impœnitentiæ tuæ, si ficta non fuerit, eo ipso faciet, ut Deus te pœnitentem verum reputet.*" This quite agrees with what he had already said in a sermon in 1515 (?): "*Etsi Deus imposuit nobis impossibilia et super virtutem nostram, non tamen hic ullus excusatur*"; for we cover ourselves with Christ: "*Christus impletionem suam nobis impertit, dum seipsum gallinam nobis exhibet.*" See above, p. 80.

[2] The passage already referred to in his Commentary on Romans also comes in here, namely, where he writes that he could not understand why after contrition and confession he should not consider himself better than others who had not confessed. By this he means to convey that the common teaching that by real contrition and confession "*esse omnia ablata et evacuata*" led to pride, whereas according to his idea sin still remained. Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1^2, p. 455, n. 4.

[3] Commentar. in Galat., ed. Irmischer, Erlangae, 1, p. 193 *seq.*: "*Vera pœnitentia incipit a timore et iudicio Dei.*"

[4] Cp. Galley, "Die Busslehre Luthers," 1900; Lipsius, "Luthers Lehre von der Busse," 1902, and Köstlin's strange attempts at explanation, "Luthers Theologie," 1^2, p. 131 ff. W. Hermann, "Die Busse der evangelischen Christen," in "Zeitschr. für Theol. und Kirche," 1, 1891, p. 30, says: "It is true that Luther never entirely forsook the true idea on this point (Penance), which he had arrived at with so much effort. But the difficulties of Church government led him to relegate this idea to the background and to return to the narrow Roman

He is utterly unfair to the Church and to her theology when he falsely asserts that she had admitted contrition from fear alone, i.e. to the utter exclusion of love; every kind of fear, he says maliciously, was recognised as sufficient for receiving absolution, even that "gallows grief" which abhorred sin solely from fear of punishment and with the intention of returning to it if no punishment existed (*timor serviliter servilis*, as it was subsequently termed by theologians). This reproach did not strike home to the theologians or to the Church. Theological and moral treatises there were in plenty, which, like the Fathers of the Church and the mediæval Doctors, taught in express terms the advantage of perfect contrition and exhorted the faithful to it. Indeed, most of the popular manuals merely taught that sin must be repented of for God's sake, from love of God, without even mentioning simple attrition. It was not only generally recognised and taken for granted that the lower, imperfect contrition, i.e. that which arises from fear, in order to be a means of forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, must include a firm resolution of not returning to sin, but it was set down as requisite that this so-called "servile" fear (*timor servilis*) must be coupled with a commencement of love of God, or else be of such a nature as to lead up to it. It is sufficient to open the works in circulation in the theological schools at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to see at what length and with what care these questions were discussed. It cannot, however, be denied that some few of the later scholastic theologians—among them, significantly enough, Johann Paltz, preceptor in the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt at the time Luther entered—did not express themselves clearly, and that some other theologians defended views which were not correct.[1]

Catholic view of the Sacrament of Penance." And also *ibid.*, p. 70: "With regard to the questions affecting contrition, the Reformers practically returned to the standpoint of the Roman Church."

[1] For the manner in which contrition was taught before Luther's time in popular works such as are here being considered, see the articles of N. Paulus in the Innsbruck "Zeitschrift für kathol. Theol.," 28, 1904; p. 1 ff., on the German confession-books; p. 449 ff. on the German books of edification; p. 682 ff. on the German books on preparation for death. Contrition arising from fear alone is not represented as sufficient in any of the numerous confession-books at that time. *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 449. Among the authors of works of piety there is only one, viz. the Augustinian Johann Paltz, in his "Celifodina" (Heavenly

But whether such theologians exerted a positive or negative influence on Luther we do not know. One thing is certain, however, namely, that he was influenced chiefly by his own desire to free himself from what he looked upon as an oppressive yoke and that his self-sufficiency and ignorance speedily led him to fancy it his duty to confront the theology of previous ages with his epoch-making discovery regarding the doctrine of fear and penance.

This process is confirmed by a letter of his addressed to Staupitz, his esteemed Superior, at a time when the commo-

Mine), to admit that contrition from the motive of fear together with the priest's absolution sufficed for the remission of sin; "but even he requires, in addition to an earnest turning away from sin, a certain striving after perfect contrition, or love; he looks upon imperfect contrition rather as a means of arriving at perfect contrition; he is even very anxious to lead the faithful to the higher level of perfect contrition." Paulus, p. 485. Cp. on Paltz, p. 475–9. Of the theologians cp. more particularly Gabriel Biel, whose writings Luther had studied, in his "*Collectorium circa 4 libros sententiarum*," Tubingæ, 1501, l. 4, dist. 35, q. unica, art. 1. Here he makes a distinction between "*timor servilis*," which is ready to sin if there were no punishment, and "*timor, qui non includit hanc deformitatem.*" He admits with regard to the latter: "*est tamen bonus et utilis, per quem fit paulatim consuetudo ad actus bonos de genere exercendos et malos vitandos, quo præparatur locus charitatis.*" In Art. 3 he declares the latter fear to be a gift of the Holy Ghost. But—in complete contradiction to the accusation which Luther makes—he teaches that contrition merely from fear is not sufficient, and requires a contrition from love. In the same way Nicholas von Dinkelsbühl in his Tractatus (Argentinæ, 1516, fol. 71) rejects the fear which is not in any way allied with love, but considers it, together with the latter, wholesome as forming a commencement of contrition. The Dominican, Johann Herolt, whose sermons were widely disseminated, teaches in the *Sermones de tempore* (1418) and the *Sermones super epistclas* (1439 and 1444) that to avoid sin merely from the fear of punishment is sinful, but he is thinking of the so-called *timor serviliter servilis*, in which the voluntary attachment to sin still remains. He, as well as some others, omits to point out that, in addition to the bad servile fear, there was also a wholesome fear (N. Paulus, in his art. on Herolt, "Zeitschrift f. kathol. Theol.," 26, 1902, p. 428 f.). The Franciscan, Stephen Brulefer, in his "Opuscula" (Parisiis, 1500, fol. 24 *seq.*) opposes certain theologians who had rejected servile fear as absolutely sinful; fear (which really excludes sin), he says, is a gift of the Holy Ghost, and theologians who teach otherwise are "*prædicatores præsumptuosi, indiscreti et insipientes*," and they deserved to be punished as heretics. It was only Luther's erroneous teaching which led theologians to formulate this doctrine with greater exactitude. Cp. A. W. Hunzinger, "Lutherstudien," 2 Heft. Abt. 1: "Das Furchtproblem in der katholischen Lehre von Augustin bis Luther," Leipzig, 1907. In this article the author wishes to furnish an introduction to Luther's doctrine of fear, but starts with the assumption that the will to sin is an essential of the fear of punishment. On Hunzinger, see the "Hist. Jahrb.," 28, 1907, p. 413 f

tion caused by his Indulgence theses was in full swing, which gives us a picture of his mental state.[1] In it he says :

"The word which I hated most in all the Scriptures was the word penance. Nevertheless [when performing penance and going to confession], I played the hypocrite bravely before God, attempting to wring out of myself an imaginary and artificial love." He also grumbles here about the "works of penance and the insipid satisfactions and the wearisome confession" ; such a prominent position ought not to be assigned to them ; the ordinary instructions and the *modus confitendi* contained nothing but the most oppressive tyranny of conscience. He had always felt this, and in his trouble it had been to him like a ray from heaven when Staupitz once told him : "True penance is that only which begins with the love of God and of justice, and what the instructions represent as the last and crown of all is rather the commencement and the starting-point of penance, namely, love." This precious truth he had, on examination, found to be absolutely confirmed by Holy Scripture ("*s. scripturæ verba undique mihi colludebant*")—Luther had a curious knack of finding in Scripture everything he wanted—even the Greek term for penance, metanoia, led up to the same conclusion, whereas the Latin "*pœnitentiam agere*" implied effort and was therefore misleading. Thus Staupitz's words had turned the bitter taste of the word penance into sweetness for him. "God's commandments always become sweet to us when we do not merely content ourselves with reading them in books ; we must learn to understand them in the wounds of our Sweetest Saviour."

The Monk was well aware that such mystical utterances were sure of finding a welcome echo with the influential Vicar of the whole Augustinian Congregation, himself a mystic. He sends him with the same letter his long Latin defence of his Indulgence theses (*Resolutiones*), which Staupitz was to forward to the Pope.

He at the same time expresses some of his thoughts concerning the connection between his doctrine of penance and the controversy on Indulgences which had just commenced, probably hoping that Staupitz would also acquaint Rome with them. These we cannot pass over without remark in concluding our consideration of Luther's doctrine on penance. The Indulgence-preachers, he says, must be withstood because they are overturning the whole system of penance ; not only do they set up penitential works and satisfaction as the principal thing, but they extol them, solely with a view to inducing the faithful to secure the remission

[1] May 30, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 195.

of satisfaction by their rich offerings in return for Indulgences. Therefore he has been obliged, though unwillingly, to emerge from his retirement in order to defend the doctrine that it is better to make real satisfaction than merely to have it remitted by securing an Indulgence.

Staupitz, a short-sighted man, was not to be convinced that, by Luther's teaching and the commotion which it was arousing, the very existence of the Augustinian Congregation was endangered and the Catholic Church herself menaced in her dogma and discipline.

Instead of watching over the communities committed to his care he spent his days in travelling from place to place, a welcome and witty guest at the tables of great men, devoting his spare time to writing pious and learned books. The sad instances of disobedience, dissension and want of discipline which became more and more prevalent in his monasteries did not induce him to lay a restraining hand upon them. Too many exemptions from regular observance and the common life had already been permitted in the Congregation in the past, and of this the effect was highly pernicious.[1] Luther himself had scarcely ever had the opportunity of acquiring any practical experience of the monastic life at its best during his conventual days; it offered no splendid picture which might have roused his admiration and enthusiasm. This circumstance must be taken into account in considering his growing coldness in his profession and his gradually increasing animosity towards the religious life. He and Staupitz helped to destroy the fine foundation of Andreas Proles at a time when it already showed signs of deterioration.

On one occasion, when referring to his administration, Staupitz told Luther, that at first he had sought to carry out his plans for the good of the Order, later he had followed

[1] Apart from Luther, we have another example of the same kind in Gabriel Zwilling, who also left the Church, and of whom Luther says in a letter to Johann Lang at Erfurt (March 1, 1517, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 87 f.), that he was sending him to the Erfurt monastery in accordance with Staupitz's directions, and that care was to be taken "*ut conventualiter per omnia se gerat: scis enim quod necdum ritus et mores ordinis viderit aut didicerit.*" Thus he had been allowed to live at Wittenberg without conforming to community rule, unless, indeed, we read the passage as implying that at the Wittenberg monastery no attention was paid to the rule by anybody.

the advice of the Fathers of the Order, and, then, entrusted the matter to God, but, now, he was letting things take their course. Luther himself adds when recounting this: "Then I came on the scene and started something new."[1] It is a proof of the weakness which was coming upon the institution, that a man holding principles such as Luther was advocating in his lectures and sermons should have been allowed to retain for three years the position of Vicar with jurisdiction over eleven monasteries. When he laid down his office in the Chapter at Heidelberg in 1518 we do not even learn that the Chapter carried out the measures which had meanwhile been decreed against Luther by the General of the Augustinians at Rome. The election of the Prior of Erfurt, Johann Lang, Luther's friend and sympathiser, as his successor, and the Heidelberg disputation in the Augustinian monastery of that town, of which the result was a victory for the new teaching, show sufficiently the feelings of the Chapter. This election was the final triumph of the non-Observantine party.

A later hand has added against Lang's name in the Register of the University of Erfurt the words "*Hussita apostata*,"[2] intended to stigmatise his falling away to the Lutheran heresy comparable only with that of Hus. On leaving the Order he wrote an insulting vindication of his conduct, in which among other things he says all the Priors are donkeys. While he was Prior at Erfurt, a Prior was appointed at Wittenberg whom Luther, as Rural Vicar, raised to this dignity almost before he had finished his year of noviceship. Only Luther's strange power over men can account for the fact that so many of the monks were convinced that he was animated by the true Spirit of God in his new ideas with regard to conventual life and religion generally, and even in his overhauling of theology. Later, when the Catholic Church had spoken, they did not see their way to retract and submit, but preferred to marry. Staupitz himself, the inexperienced theologian, deceived by his protégé's talents, often said to him: "Christ speaks through you." It is true, that, at a later date, he sternly represented to Luther that he was going too far. After most of the monks had ranged themselves under the new standard, their apathetic

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 69.
[2] Kolde, "Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation," p. 262.

and disappointed Superior withdrew to a Catholic monastery at Salzburg, where he expired in peace in 1524 as a Benedictine Abbot.

At that period Church discipline in Germany was already ruined. The man who was responsible for the downfall reveals a mental state capable of going to any extreme when in 1518 he writes to his fatherly friend Staupitz in almost fanatical language: "Let Christ see to it whether the words I have hitherto spoken are mine or His. Without His permission no Pope or Prince can give a decision (Cp. Prov. xxi. 1). . . . I have no temporal possessions to lose, I have only my weak body, tried by many labours. Should they desire to take my life by treachery or violence they will but shorten my existence by a few hours. I am content with my sweetest Saviour and Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ. Him I will praise as long as life lasts (Ps. ciii. 33). Should others refuse to sing with me, what matters it? Let them howl alone if it pleases them. May our Lord Jesus Christ ever preserve you, my sweetest father."[1]

The ultra-spiritualism which had cast its spell over Luther was compounded, as we may see from what has gone before, of pseudo-mysticism, bad theology, a distaste for practical works of piety, a tendency to polemics and a misguided zeal for reform, not to speak of other elements. This it was which animated him during the years which preceded his public apostasy. On the other hand, in the subsequent struggle against the Church it is rather less apparent, being, to a certain extent, kept within bounds by the conflict he was obliged to wage in his own camp against dangerous fanatics such as Münzer and Carlstadt. Nevertheless, his spirit had not been entirely tamed, and, when occasion arose, as we shall see later, was still capable of all its former violence.

The Monk, at the time he was at work on the Epistle to the Romans, by dint of studying the Bible and Tauler, had, as he thought, attained to the mystical light of a higher knowledge, and begins accordingly to speak of hearing the inward voice. He tries to persuade himself that he hears this voice speaking in his soul; he looks upon it as so imperative that he is obliged, so he says, to do what it com-

[1] Letter of May 30, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 199.

mands, "whether it be foolish or evil or great or small."[1] Thus the way is already paved for his mysterious comprehension of the Scriptures through the inner word, as his letter to Spalatin shows;[2] we have also here the beginning of what he supposed was the ratification of his Divine mission as proclaimer of the new teaching.

Even before much was known of the data furnished by the Commentary on Romans regarding Luther's development, Fr. Loofs, on the strength of the fragments which Denifle had made public, ventured to predict that, on the publication of the whole work, it would be seen, "that Luther was at that time following a road which might justly be described as a peculiar form of quietistic mysticism."[3] To-day we must go further and say that Luther's whole character was steeped in ultra-spiritualism.

Johann Adam Möhler says of Luther's public work as a teacher: "In his theological views he showed himself a one-sided mystic."[4] He adds, "had he lived in the second century Luther would have been a gnostic like Marcion, with some of whose peculiarities he is in singular agreement," a statement which is borne out by what we have seen of Luther's work so far. Neander, the Protestant historian, also compares the growth and development of Luther's mind with that of Marcion.[5] Neander looks upon Marcion as Luther's spiritual comrade, in fact as a Protestant, because he, like the founder of Protestantism, emphasised the evil in man everywhere, set up an antagonism between righteousness and grace, between the law and the gospel, and preached freedom from the works of the law. This Marcion did by appealing to the gnosis, or deeper knowledge. Luther likewise bases his very first utterances on this teaching and appeals to the more profound theology; he possesses that seductive enthusiasm which Marcion also displayed at the commencement of his career. Soon we shall see that Luther, again like Marcion, brushed aside such books of the Bible as stood in his way; the canon of Holy Scripture must be brought into agreement with his special conception of doctrine, and he and his pupils amplified and altered this doctrine, even in its fundamentals, to such

[1] See above, p. 95. [2] See below, p. 323.
[3] "Deutsch-evangelische Blätter," 32, 1907, p. 537.
[4] "Kirchengesch.," ed. by P. Gams, 3, 1868, p. 106.
[5] "Kirchengesch.," 1, p. 782.

a degree, that the words which Tertullian applied to Marcion might quite fit Luther too: "*nam et quotidie reformant illud*," i.e. their gospel.[1] Luther at the very outset obscured the conception of God by his doctrine of absolute predestination to hell. Marcion, it is true, went much further than Luther in obfuscating the Christian teaching with regard to God by setting up an eternal twofold principle, of good and evil. The Wittenberg Professor never dreamt of so radical a change in the doctrine respecting God, and in comparison with that of Marcion this part of his system is quite conservative.

We find in Luther, from the beginning of his career, together with his rather gloomy ultra-spiritualism, another characteristic embracing a number of heterogeneous qualities, and which we can only describe as grotesque. Side by side with his love of extremes, we find an ultra-conservative regard for the text of Holy Scripture as he understood it, no matter how allegorical his pet interpretation might be. Again, the pious mysticism of his language scarcely agrees with the practical disregard he manifested for his profession. To this must be added, on the one hand, his tendency to spring from one subject to another, and the restlessness which permeates his theological statements, and on the other, his ponderous Scholasticism. Again we have the digressions in which he declaims on public events, and, besides, his incorrect and uncharitable criticisms; here he displays his utter want of consideration, his ignorance of the world and finally a tempestuous passion for freedom in all things, which renders him altogether callous to the vindication of their rights by others and makes him sigh over the countless "fetters of men."[2] All this, taken in connection with his unusual talent, shows that Luther, though a real genius and a man of originality, was inclined to be hysterical. How curiously paradoxical his character was is revealed in his exaggerated manner of speech and his incessant recourse to antithesis.

With an unbounded confidence in himself and all too well aware of the seduction exercised by his splendid talents, he yet does not scruple to warn others with the utmost

[1] "Adversus Marcion.," 4, c. 5.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 576: In the "wretched study of right and law" we find everywhere the comfortless fetters of precepts. "*O reptilia*," he cries, "*quorum non est numerus!*"

seriousness against their "inclinations to arrogance, avarice and ambition," and to represent pride as the cardinal sin.[1] He is keen to notice defects in earlier theologians, but an unhappy trait of his own blinds him to the fact that the Church, as the invincible guardian of truth, must soon rise up against him.

He has already discovered a new way of salvation which is to tranquilise all, and yet he will be counted, not among those who feel sure of their salvation, but among the pious who are anxious and troubled about their state of grace, "who are still in fear lest they fall into wickedness, and, therefore, through fear, become more and more deeply steeped in humility in doing which they render God gracious to them."[2] The assurance of salvation by faith alone, the *sola fides* of a later date, he still protests against so vigorously, that, when he fancies he espies it in his opponents in any shape or form, he attacks them as "a pestilential crew," who speak of the signs of grace and thereby, as he imagines, lull men into security.

The last words show that the process of development is not yet ended. What we have considered above was merely the first of the two stages which he traversed before finally arriving at the conception of his chief doctrine.[3]

[1] Cp. Braun, "Concupiscenz," p. 22.
[2] "Schol. Rom.," p. 323.
[3] For the second stage, see ch. x. 1–2.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS. FIRST DISPUTATIONS AND FIRST TRIUMPHS

1. "The Commencement of the Gospel Business." Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians (1516–17)

LUTHER'S friends and admirers were at a later date loud in their praise of the lectures on the Epistle to the Romans and on that to the Galatians which he commenced immediately after, and looked upon these as marking the dawn of a new epoch in theology. Luther himself, with more accuracy, designated the first disputations, of which we shall come to speak presently, as the "commencement of the gospel business."

Melanchthon in his short sketch of Luther's life speaks pompously of these lectures and manifests his entire unacquaintance with the old Church and the truths for which she stood.

"In the opinion of the wise and pious the light of the new teaching first broke forth, after a long and dark night, in the Commentary on these Epistles. There Luther pointed out the true distinction between the law and the gospel; there he refuted the Pharisaical errors which then ruled in the schools and in the pulpits, namely, that man was able to obtain forgiveness of sin by his own efforts and could be justified before God by the performance of outward works. He brought back souls to the Son of God, he pointed to the Lamb, Who bore the guilt of our sins. He demonstrated that sin was forgiven for the sake of the Son of God and that such a favour ought to be accepted in faith. He also shed a great light on the other articles of faith."[1]

Mathesius, Luther's pupil and eulogist, in his sermons on Luther, points out, in the following passionate words, the importance of the lectures and disputations held by his master: "Dr. Luther in all his lectures and disputations chiefly treats of this question and article, whether the true faith by which we are to live a Christian life and die a happy death is to be learned from Holy Scripture or from the godless heathen Aristotle, on whom the Doctors of the Schools attempted to base the doctrine of the Romish Church and of the monks." "This is the chief

[1] "Vita Lutheri," p. 6.

issue between Dr. Luther and the Sophists. . . . Young Dr. Luther has solemnly sworn, in due form, a true, public and godly oath that he will hold fast by the holy and certain Scriptures; that it was more reasonable that we should rely in matters of faith and conscience on the godly Scriptures rather than stake our souls and consciences on the teaching of darksome Scotus, foolish Albertus, questionable Thomas of Aquin, or of the Moderns or Occamists. . . . He insisted upon this in his writings and disputations before ever he began his controversy on Indulgences. For this reason he was at the time scolded as a heretic and condemned by many because he scorned all the High Schools and the learned men. . . . Although both his brethren and other monks questioned all this, yet they were unable to bring forward anything effective against him and his weighty reasoning."[1]

Luther's sermons and letters of the years 1516 to 1518 bear witness to the commotion caused by his theological opinions.

The "new theology" which was being proclaimed at Wittenberg was discussed with dismay, particularly at Erfurt and in the more conservative monasteries. Andreas Carlstadt, Luther's colleague at the University, and Peter Lupinus, a former professor at Wittenberg, were at first among his opponents, but were speedily won over. Carlstadt indeed, as his 152 theses of April, 1517 show, even went further on the new lines than Luther himself.[2] Another of his colleagues at the University, who at a later date proved a more trustworthy ally, was Nicholas Amsdorf. Schurf, the lawyer, was one of his most able patrons among the lay professors. Spalatin, Court Chaplain, vigorously but prudently advocated his cause with the Elector. At Wittenberg Luther's party speedily gained the ascendant. The students were full of enthusiasm for the bold, ready and combative teacher, whose frequent use of German in his lectures—at that time an unheard-of thing—also pleased them.[3] The disputations, particularly, could thus be conducted with less constraint and far more forcibly.

It is hard to say how far Luther realised the danger of the path he was treading.

He wrote to Dr. Christopher Scheurl, a Nuremberg lawyer,

[1] "Historien" Bl., 8′, 9.

[2] Cp. Barge, "Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt," 1, p. 45.

[3] "Chronik," p. 28: Luther in his lectures "turned the Latin into German."

who was also one of his early patrons and protectors, thanking him in the humble words of exaggerated humanistic courtesy for the praise he had bestowed upon him: he (Luther) recognised that the favour and applause of the world were dangerous for us, that self-complacency and pride were man's greatest enemies. He, nevertheless, tells him in the same letter that Staupitz, at one time his Superior and Director, had repeatedly said to him much to his terror: "I praise Christ in you, and I am forced to believe Him in you."[1]

In his exultation at the great success which he had achieved at Wittenberg he says joyfully in the spring of 1517 in a letter to a friend: "Our theology and St. Augustine are progressing happily and prevail at our University ('*procedunt et regnant*," cp. Ps. xliv. 5). Aristotle is at a discount and is hurrying to everlasting destruction. People are quite disgusted with the lectures on the Sentences [of Peter Lombard], and no one can be sure of an audience unless he expounds this theology, i.e. the Bible or St. Augustine, or some other teacher of note in the Church."[2]

He continued to rifle St. Augustine's writings for passages which were apparently favourable to his views. He says, later, that he ran through the writings of this Father of the Church with such eagerness that he devoured rather than read them.[3] He certainly did not allow himself sufficient time to appreciate properly the profound teachings of this, the greatest Father of the Church, and best authority on grace and justification. Even Protestant theologians now admit that he quoted Augustine where the latter by no means agrees with him.[4] His own friends and contemporaries, such as Melanchthon, for instance, admitted the contradiction existing between Luther's ideas and those of St. Augustine on the most vital points; it was, however,

[1] Letter of January 27, 1517, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 83: "*Non sine timore meo me undique iactat et dicit: Christum in te prædico et credere cogor.*'

[2] To Johann Lang, May 18, 1517, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 100.

[3] From Veit Dietrich's MS. Collecta, fol. 137′, in Seidemann, "Luthers Psalmenvorlesungen," 1, p. vii.: "*Augustinum vorabam, non legebam.*"

[4] "One of the best points in Denifle's book is the proof he gives that Luther misunderstood Augustine's doctrine on sin, to which he looked as his chief support in the Church." W. Köhler, in "Ein Wort zu Denifles Luther," p. 27.

essential that this Father of the Church, so Melanchthon writes to one of his confidants, should be cited as in "entire agreement" on account of the high esteem in which he was generally held.[1] Luther himself was, consciously or unconsciously, in favour of these tactics; he tampered audaciously with the text of the Doctor of the Church in order to extract from his writings proofs favourable to his own doctrine; or at the very least, trusting to his memory, he made erroneous citations, when it would have been easy for him to verify the quotations at their source; the only excuse to be alleged on his behalf in so grave a matter of faith and conscience is his excessive precipitation and his superficiality.

Luther's lectures on the Epistle to the Galatians commenced on October 27, 1516.

These he published in 1519 in an amended form,[2] whereas those on the Epistle to the Romans never appeared to him fit for publication. Notes of the original lectures on Galatians are said to be in the possession of Dr. Krafft of Elberfeld, and will in all probability appear in the Weimar edition of Luther's works.[3]

The lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews and on that to Titus followed in 1517. Notes of the former, as stated above, exist at Rome, and their approaching publication will throw a clearer light on the change in the theological views of their author.

In the printed Commentary on Galatians Luther's teaching appears in a more advanced form. His development had not only progressed during the course of the lectures, but the time which elapsed before their publication brought him fresh material which he introduced into the Commentary. It would be essential to have them in the form in which they were delivered in order to be able to follow up the process which went forward in his mind. It is nevertheless worth while to dwell on the work and at the same time to compare parallel passages from Luther's other Commentary on Galatians—to be referred to immediately—were it only on account of the delight he takes in

[1] Melanchthon to Brenz, end May, 1531, "Briefwechsel" 9, p. 18 f.
[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 436 ff. Cp. in the Erl. ed., "Commentar. in Ep. ad Galat.," ed. Irmischer, 1, p. iii. *seq.*; 3, p. 121 *seq.*
[3] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 751, n. to p. 107, 2.

referring to this Epistle, or of the fact that his exposition of it runs counter to the whole of tradition.

Luther ever had the highest opinion of the Epistle to the Galatians and of his own Commentaries on it. At a later date he says jokingly: "*Epistola ad Galatas* is my Epistle to which I have plighted my troth; my own Katey von Bora."[1] Melanchthon praises Luther's Commentary on Galatians in a more serious fashion and says, it was in truth "the coil of Theseus by the aid of which we are enabled to wander through the labyrinth of biblical learning."[2]

Besides the shorter Commentary on Galatians published in 1519 there is also a much longer one compiled from notes of Luther's later lectures, made public in 1535 by his pupil Rörer, together with a Preface by Luther himself.[3] Protestants consider it as "the most important literary product of his academic career" and, in fact, as "the most important of his theological works."[4] In what follows we shall rely, as we said before, on the sources which afford the most accurate picture of his views, i.e. on both the shorter and the longer redaction of his Commentary on Galatians, especially where the latter repeats in still more forcible language views already contained in the former.

It is well to know that, in his expositions of the Epistle to the Galatians, Luther's antagonism to the Catholic doctrine of Works, Justification and Original Sin is carried further than in any other of his exegetical writings, until, indeed, it verges on the paradoxical. Nowhere else does the author so unhesitatingly read his own ideas into Holy Scripture, or turn his back so completely on the most venerable traditions of the Church.

For instance, he shows how God by His grace was obliged to renew, from the root upwards, the tree of human nature, which had fallen and become rotten to the core, in order that it might bear fruit which was not mere poison and sin and such as to render it worthy to be cast into hell fire. Everything is made to depend upon that terrible doctrine of Divine Predestination, which inexorably condemns a portion of mankind to hell. It never occurred to him that this doctrine of a Predestination to hell was in conflict with God's goodness and mercy, at least, he never had the least hesitation in advocating it. The only preparation for

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 437.
[2] See Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 275.
[3] In Irmischer's Erl. edition, printed in three volumes.
[4] Cp. Köstlin-Kawerau, 2, p. 300 f.

salvation is the predestination to heaven of the man upon whom God chooses to have mercy, seeing that man, on his part, is utterly unable to do anything ("*unica dispositio ad gratiam est æterna Dei electio*"). Man is justified by the faith, which is wrought by God's gracious Word and Spirit, but this faith is really confidence in God's pardoning grace through Christ ("*Sufficit Christus per fidem, ut sis iustus*"). In the printed Commentary on Galatians we already have Luther's new doctrine of the absolute assurance of salvation by faith alone.

This later discovery he insists upon, with wearisome reiteration, in the Commentary on Galatians as the only means of bringing relief to the conscience. We shall have occasion later (ch. x., 1, 2) to speak of the origin of this new element in his theology, which he made his own before the publication of the first Commentary on Galatians.

He entirely excludes love from this faith, even the slightest commencement of it, in more forcible terms than ever. "That faith alone justifies," he writes, "which apprehends Christ by means of the Word, and is beautified and adorned by it, not that faith which includes love. . . . How does this take place, and how is the Christian made so righteous?" he asks. "By means of the noble treasure and pearl, which is called Christ, and which he makes his own by faith." "Therefore it is mere idle, extravagant talk when those fools, the Sophists [the scholastic theologians] chatter about the *fides formata*, i.e. a faith which is to take its true form and shape from love."[1] The relation which exists between this view of a mechanically operating faith (which moreover God alone produces in us) and the Lutheran doctrine of the exclusive action of God in the "dead tree" of human nature, cannot fail to be perceived. How could, indeed, such a view of God's action admit of any real, organic co-operation on the part of man, even when exalted and strengthened by grace, in the work of his own eternal salvation by virtue of faith working through love?

God's mercy, Luther says, is made known to man by a whisper from above (the "secret voice"): Thy sins are forgiven thee; the perception of this is not, however, essential; probably, Luther recognised that this was altogether too problematical. Hence there is no escape from the fact that justification must always remain uncertain. The author of this doctrine demands, however, that man should induce in himself a kind of certainty, in the same way that he demands certainty in the acceptance of all facts of faith. "You must assume it as certain that your service is pleasing to God. But this you can never do unless you have the Holy Ghost."[2] How are we to know whether we have the Holy Ghost? Again he answers: "We must accept as certain and acknowledge that we are the temple of God."[3] "We must be assured that not our service only but also our person is pleasing to God."[4] He goes on in this tone without in

[1] Cp. Möhler, "Symbolik," p. 156, n. 1.
[2] Comment. in Gal., 2, p. 163. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 161. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

the least solving the difficulty.[1] He declares that we must risk, try, and exercise assurance. This, however, merely depends upon a self-acquired dexterity,[2] upon human ability, which, moreover, frequently leaves even the strongest in the lurch, as we shall see later from Luther's own example and that of his followers.

He goes so far in speaking of faith and grace in the larger Commentary on Galatians, as to brand the most sublime and holy works, namely, prayer and meditation, as "idolatry" unless performed in accordance with the only true principle of faith, viz. with his doctrine regarding justification by faith alone. This can be more readily understood when we consider that according to him, man, in spite of his resistance to concupiscence, is, nevertheless, on account of the same, guilty of the sins of avarice, anger, impurity, a list to which he significantly adds "*et cetera*,"[3]

He had expressed himself in a similar way in the shorter Commentary, but did not think his expressions in that book strong enough adequately to represent his ideas.[4]

As he constantly connects his statements with what he looks upon as the main contentions of St. Paul in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, we may briefly remind our readers of the interpretation which the older theology had ever placed upon them.

The Apostle Paul teaches, according to the Fathers and the greatest theologians of the Middle Ages, that both Jews and heathen might attain to salvation and life by faith. He proves this by showing that the heathen were not saved by the works of nature, nor the Jews by the works of the Mosaic Law; but he does not by any means exclude works altogether as unnecessary for justification. In the important passage of the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. i. 17) where Paul quotes the words of Habacuc: "The just man liveth by faith," there was no call to define more clearly the nature of justifying faith, or to explain to what extent it must be a living faith showing itself in works in charity and in hope. To exclude works from faith, as Luther assumes him to do, was very far from his intention in that passage. Nor is this idea involved in the saying which Luther so frequently quotes (Rom. iii. 28): "We account a man to be justified by faith without the works of the law," for here he merely excludes the works "of the law," i.e. according to the context such works as do not rest on faith but precede faith, whether the purely outward works of the Mosaic ceremonial law, or other natural works done apart from, or before, Christ. We shall speak later of Luther's interpolation in this passage of the word "alone" after "faith" in his translation of the Bible (see vol. v., xxxiv. 3).

When St. Paul elsewhere describes more narrowly the nature

[1] Cp. Denifle-Weiss, 1, p. 733, where a thorough examination is made of the certainty of salvation assumed in this system.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 735. [3] Cp. Möhler, p. 139.

[4] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 275.

of justifying faith (a fact to which both the Fathers and the theologians draw attention), he is quite emphatic in asserting that the sinner is not admitted by God to grace and made partaker of the heavenly promises merely by virtue of a dead faith, but by a real, supernatural faith which works by charity (Gal. v. 6). This in previous ages had been rightly understood to mean not merely an acceptance of the Word of God and the intimate persuasion of the remission of one's sins, but a faith enlivened by grace with charity. In confirmation of this, other well-known passages of the New Testament were always quoted: "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" "Do you see that by works a man is justified; and not by faith only?" "For even as the body without the spirit is dead: so also faith without works is dead." "Labour the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election."[1]

Some important disputations which the youthful University Professor held on theses and "paradoxa" formulated by himself prove how his teaching was taking ever deeper root at Wittenberg and elsewhere. The story of these disputations casts light on his peculiar tactics, viz. to meet every kind of opposition by still more forcibly and defiantly advancing his own propositions.

2. Disputations on man's powers and against Scholasticism (1516–17)

In September, 1516, Luther arranged for a remarkable Disputation to be held at Wittenberg by Bartholomew Bernhardi of Feldkirchen, in Swabia, on the occasion of the latter's promotion to be Lecturer on the Sentences. From a confidential letter of Luther's to Johann Lang, Prior at Erfurt, we learn some particulars as to the motive which determined the choice of the theses, which latter are still extant. From this we see that the Disputation was held on account of those who "barked" at Luther's lectures. "In order to shut the mouths of yelping curs, and at the same time to let the opinion of others be heard," the theses on man's absolute inability to do what is good were purposely worded in a most offensive form. This Disputation brought over Amsdorf, hitherto an opponent, to Luther's

[1] James ii. 22, 24, 26. 2 Peter i. 10. On Luther's later denial of the inspiration of the Epistle of St. James, see volume iv., xxviii. 2. In this he made no account of the critical proof of the traditional ascription of this Epistle, but considered it merely from his own subjective point of view.

side. Amsdorf sent a copy of the theses to Erfurt in order to elicit the opinion of the professors there. But, fearing lest the storm he foresaw might be directed against Luther, he deleted the superscription bearing his name ("*Sub eximio viro Martino Luthero Augustiniano*," etc.). At the Disputation Luther presided, a fact which is all the more significant when we remember that he was not at that time Dean.

Among the theses to be debated one runs as follows: Man is absolutely unable by his own unaided efforts to keep the commandments of God; he merely seeks his own, and what is of the flesh; he himself is "vanity of vanities" and makes creatures, who in themselves are good, also to be vain; he is necessarily under the dominion of sin, "he sins even when doing the best he can; for of himself he is unable either to will or to think."[1]

It is not surprising that theses such as this again roused the antagonism of the followers of the old theology. Some of Luther's former colleagues among the Erfurt monks considered themselves directly challenged. Trutfetter and Usingen, two esteemed professors at Erfurt, having dared to point out the difference between these theses and the Catholic teaching as expressed in the works of Gabriel Biel, Luther wrote to their Superior, Johann Lang: "Let them alone, let your Gabrielists marvel at my 'position' (i.e. at the theses), for mine too (i.e. Biel's Catholic-minded supporters at Wittenberg) still continue to be astonished." "Master Amsdorf formerly belonged to them, but is now half converted." "But I won't have them disputing with me as to whether Gabriel said this, or Raphael or Michael said that. I know what Gabriel teaches; it is commendable so long as he does not begin speaking of Grace, Charity, Hope, Faith and Virtue, for then he becomes a Pelagian, like Scotus, his master. But it is not necessary for me to speak further on this matter here."[2]

In the same letter he deals some vigorous blows at Gratian and the highly esteemed Peter Lombard; according to him they have made of the doctrine of penance a torment rather than a remedy; they took their matter from the treatise "On True and False Penance," attributed to St. Augustine;

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 145 ff.
[2] Letter of 1516, probably September, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 55.

but he had been compelled to deny that this "stupid and foolish" work was by St. Augustine. It is, however, quite certain that this spurious work did not constitute "the chief authority for the mediæval doctrine of Penance,"[1] neither were its contents so untheological as we are expected to believe.

Bernhardi, Luther's very devoted pupil, who held the Disputation mentioned above, has been considered by some to have been the first priest of the evangelical faith to contract matrimony.[2] This, however, is not quite correct as others preceded him. But Bernhardi, as Provost of Kemberg, was one of the first to draw this practical inference from the freedom of the gospel.

A second pupil, Franz Günther of Nordhausen, who was chosen by Luther to conduct in the following year a Disputation which partook still more of the nature of a challenge, became later a prominent partisan of Lutheranism. His Disputation was held at Wittenberg, September 4, 1517, under his master's presidency, with the object of obtaining the degree of Baccalaureus Biblicus. His 99 theses faithfully echo Luther's teaching, particularly his antagonism to Aristotle and Scholasticism. The theses were scattered abroad with the object of making converts. At Erfurt and elsewhere the friends of the new opinions to whom Luther despatched the theses were to work for the spread of the theological revolution. As a result of this Disputation his Erfurt opponents again complained that Luther was too audacious, that he was overbearing in his assertions and was flinging broadcast wicked censures of the Catholic doctors and their teaching. With these complaints, however, the matter ended, no one daring to do more.

At the end of Günther's theses the following words occur in print: "In all these propositions our intention was to say nothing, and we believe we have said nothing, which is not in accordance with Catholic doctrine and with ecclesiastical writers."[3] Yet in these prospositions we read: "Man, who has become a rotten tree, can will and do only what is evil. . . . Man's will is

[1] As Enders thinks, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 58.

[2] See Feustking, "Das Leben des ersten verehelichten evangelischen Predigers B. Bernhardi." As Enders rightly remarks, he was not really the "first married preacher"; this honour belonging to Jakob Seydler.

[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 228. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 321.

not free but captive" (thesis 5). "The only predisposition to grace is the eternal election by God and predestination" (29). "From beginning to end we are not masters of our actions but servants" (39). "We do not become righteous by doing what is right, but only after we have become righteous do we perform what is right" (40). "The Jewish ceremonial law is not a good law, neither are the Ten Commandments, and whatever is taught and commanded with regard to outward observances" (82, 83). "The only good law is the love of God which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (84).

The following will suffice to give an idea of Günther's theses on the relation of Aristotle to Christian philosophy and theology; "Aristotle's Ethics almost in its entirety is the worst enemy of grace" (41). "It is not merely incorrect to say that without Aristotle no man can become a theologian; on the contrary, we must say: he is no theologian who does not become one without Aristotle" (43, 44).

At Wittenberg the Disputation called forth enthusiastic applause among both professors and students, and the defender was unanimously ("*uno consensu dominorum*") proclaimed a Bachelor. So deeply was Luther concerned in this manifesto, that he expressed to Lang his readiness to go to Erfurt and there personally to conduct the defence of all the theses. He scoffs at those who had called them not merely paradoxical but kakodoxical and even kakistodoxical (execrable).[1] "To us," he says, "they can only be orthodox." He was very zealous in distributing them far and wide, and asked Christoph Scheurl, the Humanist of Nuremberg, to whom he sent some, to forward a copy to "our Eck . . . who is so learned and intellectual"; such was then his opinion of his future adversary.[2]

Scheurl, and no doubt Luther's other friends also, took care to spread the bold theses. This Humanist, who was prejudiced in favour of Luther, ventured to prophesy a great revolution in the domain of Divinity. At the commencement of his reply to Luther's letter he greets him with the wish, that "the theology of Christ may be reinstated, and that we may walk in His Law!"[3]

This Disputation at Wittenberg has been described by Protestants as a "decisive blow struck at mediæval

[1] Letter of September 4, 1517, to Johann Lang, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 106.

[2] Letter of September 11, 1517, to Christoph Scheurl. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

[3] Letter of November 3, 1517. *Ibid.*, p. 119: "*Ad Martinum Luder. Christi theologiam restaurare et in illius lege ambulare.*"

doctrine."[1] That it was an open challenge admits of no doubt. Reticence and humility were not among Luther's qualities. It would be to misrepresent him completely were we to assign to him, as special characteristics, bashfulness, timidity and love of retirement; however much he himself occasionally claims such virtues as his. On the other hand, he also assures us that no one can say of him that he wished the theses of this Disputation to be merely "whispered in a corner."

With this impulse to bring his new doctrines boldly before the world may be connected his taking, about this time, in one of his letters the name Eleutherius, or Free-spirited. This was his way of rendering into Greek his name Luther, agreeably with the customs of the time.

Only a few weeks after the second Disputation which we have been considering, he came forward with his Indulgence theses against Tetzel, of which the result was to be another great Disputation. Disputations seemed to him a very desirable method of arousing sympathy for his ideas; these learned encounters with his opponents gave him a good opportunity for displaying his fiery temper, his quick-wittedness, his talent as an orator, his general knowledge, and particularly his familiarity with the Bible.

But this is not yet the place to discuss the Indulgence theses against Tetzel.

The better to appreciate the state of Luther's mind at the time when he was becoming settled in his new theological principles, we may be permitted to consider here, by anticipation, another great Disputation on faith and grace, that, namely, of Heidelberg, which took place after the outbreak of Luther's hostilities with Tetzel. In comparison with these questions, the Indulgence controversy was of less importance, as we shall have occasion to see; it was in reality an accidental occurrence, though one pregnant with consequences, and, as it turned out, the most decisive of all. The common idea that the quarrel with Tetzel was the real starting-point of Luther's whole conflict with the Church is utterly untenable.

[1] Plitt, "Luthers Leben," Leipzig, 1883, p. 69.

3. Disputation at Heidelberg on Faith and Grace. Other Public Utterances

The Disputation at Heidelberg took place on April 26, 1518, about six months after the nailing up of the theses against Tetzel. A Chapter of the Augustinian Congregation held in that town afforded the opportunity for this Disputation.

To make use of the Chapters for such learned celebrations was nothing unusual, but the selection of Luther to conduct the theological discussion, at a time when his teaching on Grace and his Indulgence theses had aroused widespread comment and excitement, and when an examination of his conduct was pending in the Order, was very significant. Among the delegates of the priories present at the Chapter, all of them chosen from the older and more respected monks, there was clearly a majority in favour of Luther. Another proof of this fact is, that at the Chapter, Johann Lang, who was entirely of Luther's way of thinking, was chosen to succeed him as Rural Vicar on the expiry of Luther's term of service. Staupitz was confirmed in his dignity, though his own attitude and his persistent blind prejudice in favour of Luther must have been known to all. It appears that Luther's controversy with Tetzel was not even discussed in the Chapter ; [1] at any rate, we hear nothing whatever of it, nor even of any difficulties being raised as to Luther's position in the much more important question of justification, although strict injunctions had already been sent to the Order by the Holy See to place a check on him, and dissuade him from the course he was pursuing.[2]

If, moreover, we bear in mind the character of the theses at this Disputation, which went far beyond anything that had yet appeared, but were nevertheless advocated before all the members assembled, we cannot but look upon this unhappy Chapter as the shipwreck of the German Augustinian Congregation. At the next Chapter, which was held after an interval of two years, i.e. sooner than was customary, Staupitz received a severe reprimand from the General of the

[1] Kolde, "Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation," p. 315.

[2] Kalkoff, "Forschungen zu Luthers römischem Prozess," 1905, p. 44 *seq.* Pastor, "History of the Popes," English translation, volume vii., p. 361 ff.

Order and at last laid down his office as Superior of the Congregation.[1] His weakness and vacillation had, however, by that time already borne fruit.

Leonard Beyer, an Augustinian, another of Luther's youthful pupils, was chosen by him to defend the theses at Heidelberg under his own supervision. The Disputation was held in the Lecture-room of the Augustinian monastery in the town. Among the numerous guests present were the professors of the University of Heidelberg. They were not of Luther's way of thinking, and rather inclined to join issue in the discussion, though in general their demeanour was peaceable; one of the younger professors, however, in the course of the dispute voiced his disagreement in an interruption: "If the peasants hear that, they will certainly stone you."

Among those present, four young theologians, who at a later date went over to the new faith and became its active promoters, followed with lively interest the course of the discussion, in which Luther himself frequently took part; these were Martin Bucer, an eloquent Dominican, afterwards preacher at Strasburg and a close friend of Luther; Johann Brenz, a Master of Philosophy, who subsequently worked for the new teaching in Swabia; Erhard Schnepf, who became eventually a preacher in Württemberg, and Theobald Billicanus, whom the theologians at Heidelberg who remained faithful to the Church summoned to be examined before them on account of his lectures, and who then was responsible for the apostasy of the town of Nördlingen. The Disputation at Heidelberg had a great influence on all these, and rendered them favourable to Luther.

The first named, Martin Bucer, full of enthusiasm for Luther, informed a friend, that at the end of the Disputation he had completely triumphed over all his opponents and roused in almost all his hearers admiration of his learning, eloquence, and fearlessness.[2]

If, however, we consider the theses from the theological

[1] Kolde, p. 327.

[2] Bucer to Beatus Rhenanus, May 1, 1518, in the Correspondence of Beatus Rhenanus, ed. Horawitz and Hartfelder, Leipzig, 1866, p. 106 f. Also in "*Relatio historica de disputatione Heidelbergensi ad Beatum Rhenanum*," printed in the "Introductio in hist. evang." by D. Gerdesius, Gröningen, 1744, Supp., p. 176. Cp. "Luthers Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 352. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 385.

standpoint, we are able to understand better the impression which Bucer in the same letter states they made on others, namely, that this new theology of Wittenberg, which exalted itself above Scholasticism and the learning of previous ages, and even above the teaching of the whole Church from the time of her Divine institution, justified the most serious apprehensions and indictments.

Twenty-eight theses had been selected from theology and twelve from philosophy. The very first theological proposition declared in Luther's bold, paradoxical style, that the law of God was unable to assist a man to righteousness, but, on the contrary, was a hindrance to him in this respect.[1] Some of the other propositions were hardly less strong: Man's works, however good they may be, are probably never anything but mortal sins (3); after sin free will is will only in name, and when a man has done the best he is capable of, he commits a mortal sin (13). If these assertions recall some which we have heard before, they are followed by others expressing, in the most startling manner, his theory on grace. "He is not righteous who performs many works, but he who, without works, believes firmly in Christ" (25). "The law says, 'do this' and it is never done; Grace says 'believe in Him (Christ)' and everything is already done" (26). "Man must altogether despair of himself in order to be fit to receive the grace of Christ" (18).

In the proofs, the text of which is still extant and was probably printed together with the theses, we read other statements which remove all doubt as to the seriousness of the propositions put forth: "Righteousness is infused by faith, for we read: 'the just man liveth by faith' (Rom. i. 17) . . . not as though the just man did not perform any works, but because his works are not the cause of righteousness, but righteousness is the cause of the works. Grace and faith are infused without any work on our part, and then the works follow."[2]

Luther in one passage of these "proofs" addresses to himself the only too-well-founded objection: "Therefore we will be content without virtue as we on our part are able only to sin!"[3] But instead of solving this objection in a proper form, he answers rhetorically: "No, fall on your knees and implore grace, put your hope in Christ in Whom is salvation, life and resurrection. Fear and wrath are wrought by the law, but hope and mercy by grace."[4]

Underlying the whole Disputation, we perceive that antagonism to the fear of God as the Judge of transgressions against the

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 353. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 385.

[2] Concl. 25, "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 364. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 402.

[3] Concl. 16, "*Quid igitur faciemus? Vacabimus otio, quia nihil nisi peccatum facimus.*"

[4] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 360. "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 398.

law, which the reader has before remarked in Luther; that fear which Catholic teaching had hitherto represented as the beginning of conversion and justification.

Utterances drawn from that mysticism into which he had plunged and the language of which he had at that time made his own, are also noticeable. He speaks at the Disputation of the annihilation through which a man must pass in order to arrive at the certainty of salvation (a road which is assuredly only for the few, whereas all stand in need of certainty): "Whoever is not destroyed and brought back to nothingness by the cross and suffering, attributes to himself works and wisdom. But whoever has passed through this annihilation does not pursue works, but leaves God to work and to do all in him; it is the same to him whether he performs works or not; he is not proud of himself when he does anything, nor despondent when God does not work in him."[1] He then proceeds, describing the absolute passivity of his mysticism as the foundation of the process of salvation: "He [who is to be justified] knows that it is enough for him to suffer and be destroyed by the cross in order to be yet more annihilated. This is what Christ meant when He said (John iii. 7): 'Ye must be born again.' If Christ speaks of 'being born again,' it necessarily follows that we must first die, i.e. feel death as though it were present."

Besides the antagonism to true and well-grounded fear, and the mystical veneer, there is a third psychological element which must be pointed out in the Heidelberg Theses, viz. the uncalled-for emphasis laid on the strength of concupiscence and man's inclination to what is evil, and the insufficient appreciation of the means of grace which lead to victory. This view of the domination of evil, which must ultimately be favourable to libertinism, accompanies the theoretical expression and the practical realisation of his system.

In the Heidelberg Disputation we find in the proof of thesis 13, already referred to: "It is clear as day that free will in man, after Adam's Fall, is merely a name and therefore no free will at all, at least as regards the choice of good; for it is a captive, and the servant of sin; not as though it did not exist, but because it is not free except for what is evil."[2] This Luther pretends to find in Holy Scripture (John viii. 34, 36), in two passages of St. Augustine "and in countless other places." He undertakes to prove this in a special note, by the fact that, according to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, man is unable during life to avoid all faults, that he must fall without the assistance of grace, and that, according to 2 Timothy ii. 26, he is held captive by the "snares of the devil." "The wicked man sins," he says,

[1] Concl. 24. [2] Cp. above, p. 202 ff.

"when he does what is good." "The righteous man also sins in his good works," according to the words of the Apostle: "But I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind" (Rom. vii. 23). God works everything in us; but just as the carpenter, however capable he may be, cannot work properly with a jagged axe, so, in spite of God's work, sin still remains, owing to the imperfection of the tool He makes use of, i.e. on account of the sinfulness which permeates us.[1]

"The mercy of God consists in this, that He has patience with us in spite of our sins and graciously accepts our works and our life notwithstanding their complete worthlessness. . . . We escape His Judgment through His mercy [to which we cling through faith alone], not by our own righteousness. . . . God excuses our works and makes them pardonable; He supplies what is wanting in us, and thus He is our righteousness."[2]

"How is it possible that a 'servant of sin' should do anything else but sin? How can a man perform a work of light when he is in darkness, a work of wisdom when he is a fool, the work of a whole man when he is lying there sick, etc.? Therefore all that a man does is the work of the devil, of sin, of darkness and foolishness." "Why do we say that concupiscence is irresistible? Well, just try to do what you can, but without concupiscence! Of course, this is impossible. Thus your nature does not keep the law. If you do not keep this, then still less can you keep the law of charity."[3]

The crown of all this is found in certain propositions from another of Luther's Disputations (the fourth) held at Wittenberg in 1518, of which the eminently characteristic title is: "For the ascertaining of the Truth and for the Quieting of anxious Consciences." Here we find this exhortation: "Cast yourself with a certain despair of your own self, more particularly on account of the sins of which you are ignorant, with confidence into the abyss of the mercy of God, Who is true to His promises. The sum total is this: The Just man shall live by faith, not, however, by works or by the law."[4] Such is the theology which he calls the "Theology of the Cross."[5] The Church, with a past of fifteen centuries behind her, also taught that the just man must live by faith, but by this she meant a real faith

[1] In the *Explicatio conclusionis* VI., "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 367, where the editor says in a note: "Martin Bucer testifies in his letter to Beatus Rhenanus on May 1, 1518, that this comparison was made by Luther in the Disputation." See p. 74, n. 9.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 370.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 371, 374.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 633.

[5] Disput., Heidelberg, *an.* 1518, thes. 24. Cp. thes. 20. "Werke." Weim. ed., 1, p. 362 f. Cp. above, p. 235.

which leads to the love of the cross, which expresses itself in submission, in salutary fear, in a striving after what is good and which bears in itself the seeds of charity. She thus exhorted the faithful to penance, the practice of good works and a practical embracing of the cross. That was her "Theology of the Cross."

The three more important Disputations considered above were designated by Luther himself as the "beginning of the evangelical business." He gave the title *Initium negocii evangelici* to a collection of the theses debated at these Disputations which appeared in print at Wittenberg in 1538.[1] It is significant that the theses against Tetzel and on Indulgences have no place in this collection of the earliest "evangelical" documents.

While Luther was on his way back from Heidelberg, in a letter to Trutfetter his former professor, he submitted certain thoughts on his own theological position, which may well be deemed his programme for the future. To this worthy man, who failed to share his views and had given him timely warning of his errors, he says: "To speak plainly, my firm belief is that the reform of the Church is impossible unless the ecclesiastical laws, the Papal regulations, scholastic theology, philosophy and logic as they at present exist, are thoroughly uprooted and replaced by other studies. I am so convinced of this that I daily ask the Lord that the really pure study of the Bible and the Fathers may speedily regain its true position."[2]

In this remarkable letter, which is a curious mixture of respect and disputatious audacity, Luther admits that, on account of his teaching on grace, he is already being scolded in public sermons as a "heretic, a madman, a seducer and one possessed by many devils"; at Wittenberg, however, he says, at the University all, with the exception of one licentiate, declare that "they had hitherto been in ignorance of Christ and His gospel." Too many charges were brought against him. Let them "speak, hear, believe all things of him in all places," he would, nevertheless, go forward and not be afraid. Here he does not pass over his theses against Tetzel in silence; they had, he says, been spread in a quite

[1] Cp. "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 143, n.
[2] Letter of May 9, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 187.

unexpected manner, whereas with his other theses this had not been the case ; this he regretted as otherwise he would have " expressed them more clearly." When publishing his Indulgence theses he had had the truth concerning " the grace of Christ "—which he also defended at Heidelberg—much at heart, for the result of the abuse of the system of Indulgences was, that there was scarcely anyone who did not hope to obtain the great gift of the " grace of God " by means of a paltry Indulgence, a disgraceful reversal of the true order of things.

4. Attitude to the Church

The foundations of the principal erroneous doctrines of the new theology were already laid at a time when Luther was still unmistakably asserting the authority of the Church and the Papacy and the duty of submission incumbent on all who desired to be true Christians.

Neither before his deviation from the Church's doctrine nor whilst the new views were growing and becoming fixed, did he go astray with respect to the binding nature of the Church's teaching office, or seek to undermine the Divine pre-eminence of the Holy See. Such a course would, it is true, have been logical, as not one of the doctrines which the Church proposes for belief can be assailed without the whole of her doctrinal edifice being affected, and without calling in question both her infallibility and her rightful authority. Only subsequent to the Leipzig Disputation, at which Luther unreservedly denied the doctrinal authority of General Councils, do we find him prepared to abandon the traditional view with regard to the Church and her teaching office.

The formal principle of Lutheranism dates only from this denial. The determining factor is no longer ecclesiastical authority, but the private judgment of the individual, i.e. the understanding of Holy Scripture—now considered as the only source of religious knowledge—acquired under the guidance of Divine enlightenment. Even then Luther was in no hurry to formulate any clear theory of the Church, of the Communion of the Faithful, of the oneness of Faith, and of its mouthpiece. On the contrary, he frequently returns then and even later, as will be seen below, to his

earlier conception of the Church, so natural was it to him and to his time, so indispensable did her claims appear to him, and so logically did they result from the whole connection between Divine Revelation and the scheme of salvation.

How are we to explain this contradiction so long present in Luther's mind, viz. his abandonment of the principal dogmas of the Church and, at the same time, his emphatic assertion of the Church's authority? Chiefly by his lack of theological training, also by his confusion of mind and deficiency in real Church feeling; then again by his excess of imagination, by his pseudo-mysticism, and above all by his devotion to his own ideas. Moreover, as we know, the two conflicting tendencies did not dwell at peace within him but were responsible for great restlessness and trouble of mind. Had he been more in living touch with the faith and spirit of the Church, he would doubtless have recognised the urgent necessity of choosing between an absolute abandonment of his new theological views and a definite breach with the Church of his fathers. In explanation of the confusion of his attitude to the Church we must call to mind what has already been said, how, owing to the evils rampant in the Church, he had not had the opportunity of seeing that Divine institution at its best, a fact which may have helped to weaken in his mind the conception of her sublime mission and the binding nature of her ancient faith. He remained in the Church, just as he remained in the religious state, though its ideals had become sadly obscured in his eyes.

In its place he built up for himself an imaginary world, quite mistaking the true state of affairs with regard to his own position. He fancied that the representatives of the Church would gradually come round to his point of view, seeing that it was so well founded. He thought that the Papacy, when better informed, would never be able to condemn the inferences he had made from the clear Word of God, and his precious discovery for the solacing of every sinner.

Perhaps he also sought to shelter himself behind the divergent opinions entertained by the theologians of that day with regard to justification. Several details, as yet undefined, of this dogma, were then diversely explained, though no doubt existed regarding the essentials. The

views propounded by members of the Council of Trent show how many side questions in this department called for definition and learned research before the Council could arrive at the classical formulation of the whole matter.[1] No true theologian, however, owing to want of distinctness in the minor details of the dogma was, like Luther, prepared to cast it overboard, or to demand its entire revision.

In the case of this strangely constituted man inward discernment alone counted for anything.

With him this outweighed far too easily all the claims of external authority, and how could it be otherwise when, already at an early stage of his career, while perusing the Holy Scriptures he had felt the Spirit of God in his new ideas? We have a picture of his feelings in his letter to Spalatin of January 18, 1518, in which he says, the principal thing when studying the Book of Books is to "despair of our own learning and our own sagacity." "Be confident that the Spirit will instil the sense into your mind. Believe this on my experience. Therefore begin, starting with a humble despair, to read the Bible from the very commencement."[2] There is here no reference to the traditional interpretation handed down from the first centuries through the Fathers and the theologians; in place of this each one is invited to seek for enlightenment under the guidance of that light which he assumes to be the "Spirit."

And yet Luther's teaching with regard to the authority of the Universal Church is, according to a sermon preached in 1516, as follows: "The Church cannot err in proclaiming the faith; only the individual within her is liable to error. But let him beware of differing from the Church; for the Church's leaders are the walls of the Church and our fathers; they are the eye of the body, and in them we must seek the light."[3] As the idea has not yet dawned upon him that the whole body of the bishops had strayed from the path of truth, he does not consider it necessary first to seek where the true Church is; he simply finds it there where Peter presides in his successors. No private illumination, no works however great, justify a separation from the Papacy.[4] In accordance with this principle, even in 1518, amidst the storm of excitement and not long before the printing of his sermon on excommunication, he assures Staupitz, his Superior, with the utmost confidence: "I shall hold the Church's authority in all

[1] Cp. Möhler, "Symbolik," pp. 100, 154 ff.
[2] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 142.
[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 3, p. 170.
[4] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 69. See above, p. 34 f.

honour"; it is true, he goes on to say: "I have no scruple, Reverend Father, about going forward with my exploration and interpretation of the Word of God. The summons [to Rome] and the menaces which have been uttered do not move me. I am suffering, as you know, incomparably worse things which allow me to pay but little heed to such as are temporal and transitory."[1]

The woes which he repeatedly utters against heretics, and of which we have already given a striking example (above, p. 225), are very startling, coming from his lips. In his exposition of the Psalms he points a warning finger at pride, the source of all heresies: "Out upon our madness, how often and how greatly, do we fall into this fault! All the heretics fell through inordinate love of their own ideas. Hence it was not possible but that what was false should appear to them true, and, what was true, false. . . . Wisdom, in its original purity, can exist only in the humble and meek."[2]

It would be easy to multiply the passages in which Luther, in his early days, asserts with absolute conviction the various doctrines of the Church which at a later date he was to attack.

It may suffice to take as an example the doctrine of Indulgences which was soon to become the centre of the controversy started by his theses on this subject. Luther presents the doctrine quite clearly and correctly in a sermon on Indulgences preached in 1516.[3] Here he makes his own the general Catholic teaching, notwithstanding that it clashes with his ideas on grace and justification, a fact of which he assuredly was aware.

"An Indulgence," he says, "is the remission of the temporal punishment which the penitent would have to undergo, whether imposed by the priest or endured in Purgatory; formerly, for instance, seven years [of penance] were imposed in this way for certain sins." "Therefore we must not imagine that our salvation is straightway secured when we have gained an Indulgence," as it merely remits the temporal punishment. "Those alone obtain complete remission of the punishment who, by real contrition and confession, are reconciled with God." "The souls in Purgatory, as the Bull expressly states, profit by the Indulgence only so far as the power of the Keys of Holy Church extend"; "*per applicationem intercessionis,*" as he says, i.e. to use the common theological expression, "*per modum suffragii.*"[4] "Hence the immediate and complete liberation of souls from Purgatory is not to be assumed." "The Indulgences are [i.e. are based on] the merits of Christ and His saints and are therefore to be

[1] Letter of September 1, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 223.
[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 4, p. 83.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1, p. 65 ff. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 65 ff.

accepted with due veneration." "However the case may stand with regard to the abuses to be apprehended in the use of indulgences," so he ends his lengthy and important explanation, "the offer and acceptance of Indulgences is of the greatest utility, and perhaps in our times when God's mercy is so greatly despised, it is His Will to bestow His favours upon us by means of these Indulgences. . . . Indulgences must, however, never lead us, of the Church militant, to a false sense of security and to spiritual indolence." The speaker goes much more fully into detail on many difficult questions than could be done in a sermon to-day. On certain subtle points of theological controversy regarding Indulgences, which had as yet not been definitely settled among the learned, he admits his ignorance and his doubts. One thing, however, is certain, namely, that he had no right to assert, as he did later, that the age was steeped in the deepest ignorance with regard to the nature of Indulgences, merely because some of these more recondite questions had not been fully solved. His own sermon just quoted is a refutation of the charge.

In this sermon he also attacks the abuses which in those days were connected with the system of Indulgences, particularly the disorders which prevailed at the sermons and collections made for Indulgences granted in support of various pious works and usually undertaken by certain noted popular preachers. In one of his strong generalisations he thus addressed his hearers at the very commencement: "Indulgences have become the dirty tool of avarice! Who is there who seeks the salvation of souls by their means and not rather the profit of his purse? The behaviour of the Indulgence-preachers makes this plain; for these commissaries and their delegates do nothing in their sermons but praise the Indulgences and urge the people to give donations, without instructing them as to what an Indulgence is."[1]

At that time John Tetzel was making a great stir with the preaching of the Indulgence granted by Pope Leo X for the church of St. Peter in Rome.

Luther's inward falling away from the teaching of the Church and his whole state of mind had made him ripe for a great public struggle. His action with regard to Tetzel was merely the result of what had gone before, and the consequences of the controversy were vastly more important than the actual point in dispute.

Many years later, when the circumstances appeared to him very different from what they really were, Luther related that he had lived in humble retirement in his monastery, studying Holy Scripture and following his calling as Doctor of the Word of God until he was drawn by force into the controversy, and called forth into the arena of

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 65.

public life. "I was completely dead to the world till God deemed the time had come; then Squire Tetzel excited me with the Indulgence and Doctor Staupitius spurred me on against the Pope." [1]

Then gradually, so he says, his "other preaching followed," i.e. that against "holiness by works," and set free those who had become "quite weary" of Popery with its self-righteousness; this "other preaching" was as follows: "Christ says: Be at rest; thou art not pious, I have done all for thee, thy sins are forgiven thee." [2] Nevertheless, for some years, so he assures us, he continued to practise "in ignorance" the works of idolatry and unbelief in the monastery, those works to which "everyone clung"; [3] then at last he cut himself adrift and laid aside the monk's habit "to honour God and shame the devil." [4]

[1] "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 188.
[2] "Werke," Erl. ed., 48, p. 401. [3] *Ibid.*, 49, p. 300.
[4] "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 1, p. 183. These words are there placed in the year 1523.

CHAPTER IX

THE INDULGENCE THESES OF 1517 AND THEIR AFTER-EFFECTS

1. Tetzel's preaching of the Indulgence; the 95 theses

A MEMBER of the Dominican Order who would otherwise have remained but little known in history obtained through Luther a world-wide name.

Everyone has heard of the Indulgence-preacher, John Tetzel, the active and able popular speaker, to whom Albert of Brandenburg, Archbishop and Elector of Mayence, entrusted the proclamation of the Indulgence granted by Leo X for the building of the new Church of St. Peter. In 1516 and 1517 he made the Indulgence known throughout the dioceses of Magdeburg and Halberstadt, appealing everywhere for funds to carry out the great enterprise in Rome. What he taught was, in the main, the same as Luther had previously taught regarding Indulgences (see above, p. 324); he, like all theologians, was careful to point out that an Indulgence was to be considered merely as a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, but not of the actual guilt of sin.[1] He declared, quite rightly, that the erection of the Church of St. Peter was a matter of common interest to the whole Christian world, and that the donations towards it were to be looked upon as part of the pious undertakings and good works which were always required

[1] Many of the erroneous Protestant notions as to the doctrine of Indulgences might be removed by a glance at any Catholic handbook of theology. See, for instance, Hurter, "Theol. dogmat.," ed. 11 (1903), t. 3, p. 499 *seq.*, 509, where, for example, the expression "*relaxatio pœnæ et culpæ*," which has shocked so many moderns, is explained in the correct historical and theological sense, reference, for instance, being made to the article by N. Paulus (partly against Th. Brieger) in the "Zeitschrift für kath. Theol.," 23, 1899, p. 48 ff, "Johann von Paltz über Ablass und Reue." The German Augustinian Paltz is an authentic witness to the Catholic view at that time. "The guilt is remitted," he says, "by virtue of the Sacrament of Penance which is here introduced, and the punishment by virtue of the Indulgence which is here dispensed." "Celifodina," fol. x., 1, in Paulus, p. 51, n. 4.

by the Church as one of the conditions for gaining an Indulgence. At the same time, in accordance with the teaching and practice of the Church, he demanded of all, as an essential preparation for the Indulgence, conversion and change of heart together with a good confession.[1]

The proclamation of this Indulgence on behalf of St. Peter's—which was preached throughout almost the whole of the Christian world—in the great dioceses of Mayence and Magdeburg, had been entrusted by Leo X, in 1514, to Archbishop Albert of Brandenburg, who held both these sees.

This respected but worldly minded Elector had made the customary payment, in this instance a very heavy one, to the Roman Court for his confirmation in the see of Mayence and in return for the pallium. He had also, in compliance with an appeal made by the Papal Dataria, presented to the Holy See ten thousand ducats, which he had raised through the Fuggers of Augsburg, in order to secure the above Indulgence for his dioceses ; in return for this the Pope had made over to him, once for all, one-half of the total proceeds of the Indulgence. With this he hoped to repay his creditors, the Fuggers.[2] The details of this affair will be dealt with later, but we may here remark that it was a transaction which certainly was unworthy of so sacred a cause as that of an Indulgence, and which can only be explained by the evil customs of that day, the pressure applied by Albert's agents, and the influence of the avaricious Florentine party at the Papal Court. Though perhaps not actually simoniacal it certainly cannot be approved.

We cannot here refrain from drawing attention to a fact which stands for all time as a solemn warning to the pastors of the Church. Just as the sight of the corruption, both ecclesiastical and moral, in Rome under Julius II, and the remembrance of an Alexander VI, had filled Luther with bitter prejudice on his journey to Italy, so the extremely worldly and regrettable action of the Curia, and episcopal toleration of actual abuses in the promulgation of the Indulgence, supplied him with welcome matter for his

[1] See below, ix. 2.

[2] A. Schulte, "Die Fugger in Rom 1495–1523," 2 vols., Leipzig, 1904. W. Schörs, "Die Mainzer Erzbischofswahl und der Ablass vom Jahre 1514," in the Innsbruck "Zeitschrift für kath. Theol.," 31, 1907, pp. 267–302. For details on this matter see the next section.

charges and with a deceitful pretext for the seducing of countless souls.

Luther learned many discreditable particulars concerning the arrangement arrived at between Rome and Mayence for the preaching of the Indulgence and the use to which half of the spoils was to be applied. What provoked Luther and many others was not only the abuses which prevailed in the use of Indulgences, about which there was much grumbling, and the constantly recurring collections which were a burden both to the rulers and their people, but also the tales current regarding the behaviour of the monk acting as Indulgence-preacher. Tetzel did not exactly shine as an example of virtue, although the charges against his earlier life are as baseless as the reproach of gross ignorance. He was, as impartial historians have established, forward and audacious and given to exaggeration. In his sermons, mainly owing to his popular style of address, he erred by using expressions only to be styled as strained and ill-considered. He even employed phrases of a repulsive nature in his attempts to extol the power of the Indulgence preached by him. In addition to this, in explaining how the Indulgence might be applied to the departed, he made his own the wrong, exaggerated and quite unauthorised opinions of certain isolated theologians, putting them on an equal footing with the real teaching of the Church. Such private opinions, it is true, had also found their way into some of the official instructions on Indulgences. At any rate, Tetzel, with misplaced zeal, mingled what was true with what was false or uncertain. The great concourse of people who gathered to hear the celebrated preacher also led to many disorders, more particularly when, as was the case at Annaberg, the occasion of the yearly fair was turned to account in order to publish the Indulgence.

Shortly after the sermon already spoken of Luther preached again at Wittenberg on the Indulgence and its abuses, but without expressly referring to Tetzel. Another sermon on the same subject was delivered at the Castle in the presence of the Elector on the occasion of the exposition of the rich collection of relics belonging to the Castle Church. He still openly admitted the value of Indulgences, but more and more he was disposed to find fault with the formalism into which the system had degenerated. Later he

declared that he had begun, already in 1516, " to dispute about Indulgences and to write against the Pope " ; only the first part of this clause is, however, true, and that only in a certain sense. He had as yet written nothing against the Primacy or against Indulgences as such. There is also no foundation for the statement that, as soon as he heard from Staupitz (at Grimma) of Tetzel's behaviour, he exclaimed : " Please God, I will knock a hole in his drum."

It was on the question of Indulgences that the wider controversy around his new doctrines, which were now complete, was to commence. In October, 1517, he decided to make a public attack on Tetzel. This he did when, on the Eve of All Saints, October 31, 1517, he nailed up his 95 theses on Indulgences on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. As All Saints was the Titular Feast of the Church [1] and as, on that day, numbers would be flocking thither to celebrate the festival, he counted on securing wide publicity for his theses. As a matter of fact, by this means, and thanks to the efforts of Luther and his friends, the printed theses were soon known everywhere. Their very boldness and impudence also contributed to their popularity. They were soon being read throughout Germany, exciting general surprise and even admiration of the Monk's language. The number of those who sincerely applauded the theses, or who, at any rate, approved of the greater part of their contents, was much greater than has been generally believed.

The theses, of course, contained things which were incomprehensible to non-theologians, but the very tone in which they were written showed all the stupendous importance of the step which had been taken. The more timid were pacified by an introductory explanation of the author embodied in the paper containing the theses, which stated that the propositions did not determine anything definite, but that " out of love and zeal for the ascertaining of the truth " a public Disputation on these questions would be held by Luther at Wittenberg, and that those who were precluded from taking a personal part in the debate might state their objections in writing.[2]

[1] Not the anniversary of its dedication. Cp. N. Müller in the " Archiv für Reformationsgesch.," (6), 1909, p. 184, n. 4.

[2] " Luthers Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 529. For the theses see also, Erl. ed., " Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 285 *seq.*

If we examine the theses more closely and watch the behaviour of their author after they were made public, there appears to be no doubt that they were considered by him as settled beforehand and not merely as tentative propositions. Many of them, from the theological point of view, go far beyond a mere opposition to the abuse of Indulgences. Luther, stimulated by contradiction, had to some extent altered his previous views on the nature of Indulgences, and brought them more into touch with the fundamental principles of his erroneous theology.

A practical renunciation of the doctrine of Indulgences, as it had been held up to that time, is to be found in the theses, where Luther states that Indulgences have no value in God's sight, but are merely to be regarded as the remission by the Church of the canonical punishment (theses 5, 20, 21, etc.). This destroys the theological meaning of Indulgences, for they had always been considered as a remission of the temporal punishment of sin, but as a remission which held good before the Divine Judgment-seat.[1] In some of the theses (58, 60) Luther likewise attacks the generally accepted teaching with regard to the Church's treasury of grace, on which Indulgences are based. Erroneous views concerning the state of purgation of the departed occur in some of the propositions (18, 19, 29). Others appear to contain what is theologically incorrect, and connected with his opinion regarding grace and justification; this opinion is not, however, clearly set forth in the list of theses.

Many of the statements are mere irritating, insulting and cynical observations on Indulgences in general, no distinction being made between what was good and what was perverted. Thus, for instance, thesis 66 declares the "treasures of Indulgences" to be simply nets "in which the wealth of mankind is caught." Others again scoff and mock at the authority of the Church, as, for example, thesis 86. "Why does not the Pope build the Basilica of St. Peter with his own money and not with that of the poverty-stricken faithful, seeing that he possesses to-day greater riches than the most wealthy Crœsus?"

In order that a certain echo of the author's mystical

[1] Cp. Nos. 19, 20 and 21 of the 41 propositions of Luther condemned in 1520.

Theologia Crucis may not be wanting even in this public document, the last two theses contain a protest against the formalism of the system of Indulgences: "Let Christians be exhorted to follow Christ, their Head, through suffering and through the pains of death and hell," "in order the better to reach heaven they should put their trust in much tribulation rather than in the certainty of peace."

The 95 theses spread rapidly through Germany, adding dangerously to the already widespread dissatisfaction with the Church and the Pope.

To Scultetus, Bishop of Brandenburg, within whose jurisdiction Wittenberg lay, and to others, too, Luther continued to explain the matter as though the theses were merely intended to serve as the basis for a useful Disputation,[1] which, however, as a matter of fact, never took place. He assured the chief pastor of Brandenburg of his absolute submission and his readiness to follow the Catholic Church in everything. At the same time, however, he stated quite clearly that, in his opinion, nothing could be advanced against his theses either from Holy Scripture, Catholic doctrine or canon law, with the exception of the utterances "of some few canonists, who spoke without proofs, and of some of the scholastic Doctors who cherished similar views, but who also were unable to demonstrate anything"; it was not, of course, for him to give any decision, but he might surely be permitted to open a discussion by means of the Disputation.

Relying on his skill at debate, he looked forward to a victory over Tetzel and to an opening for commencing the struggle against the abuses connected with the preaching of the Indulgence. Here we may recall the words of his pupil Oldecop, already quoted before: "He spoke in unmeasured terms against it [i.e. Indulgence-preaching], with great impetuosity and audacity." He started the controversy, being, says Oldecop, "by nature proud and audacious."[2]

Carried away by the astounding and ever-growing applause of those who were otherwise loyal to the Church, and deaf to the warnings and admonitions given him, Luther launched among the people a German work entitled

[1] Letter to Bishop Hieronymus Scultetus of May 22, 1518 (?), "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 150: "*Inter quæ sunt de quibus dubito, nonnulla ignoro, aliqua et nego.*" P. 151: "*Disputo non assero,*" etc.

[2] "Chronik," ed. K. Euling, p. 48 f. Cp. above, p. 280.

"A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace," which contains statements yet more vehement and seditious. Almost at the same time, and in the greatest haste, he put on paper the weighty "Resolutions" on his theses, written in Latin for the benefit of the more learned. The latter appeared in print in the spring of 1518.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of 1518, the Archbishop of Mayence had forwarded to Rome an account of the movement which had been started and of the Monk's theses. As a result of this step the Pope, Leo X, on February 3, instructed P. Gabriele della Volta, Vicar to the General of the Augustinians, to seek to turn Luther aside from his erroneous views by letter and by the admonitions of honest and learned men; delay might fan the spark into a flame which it might be impossible to extinguish.[1]

There is no doubt that instructions to this effect were despatched by Volta to Staupitz, and probably other measures were contemplated at the approaching Chapter of the German Augustinian Congregation at Heidelberg; the calming of the storm was a duty incumbent primarily on the Order itself, and the Holy See accordingly decided to act through Luther's immediate superiors. Unfortunately, nothing whatever is known of any steps taken by the Order at this early stage. At the Heidelberg Chapter, which was held towards the end of April (above, p. 315) the election of a new Vicar-General of the Congregation to which Luther belonged had to take place; a new Rural Vicar had also to be elected in place of Luther, as the latter had now completed his term of office. It seems plain that Staupitz and the large party who favoured Luther wished to act as gently as possible and not to interfere in the movement beyond making the necessary change in the person of the Rural Vicar.

After Luther had received the summons to Heidelberg, the Elector wrote to Staupitz a letter dated Friday in

[1] Cp. Pastor, "History of the Popes," volume vii., English translation, p. 361. Kalkoff, "Forschungen zu Luthers römischem Prozess," Rom., 1905, p. 44 f., and "Zu Luthers römischem Prozess: Das Verfahren des Erzbischofs v. Mainz gegen Luther," in "Zeitschrift für Kirchengesch.," 31, 1910, pp. 48–65. Cp. *ibid.*, p. 368 ff., on the Dominicans. Both authors should be consulted for the subsequent history of Rome's intervention. The Papal letter in Bembi, *Epistolæ Leonis X*, 1, 16, n. 18.

Easter week, with a request to see that Luther, on account of his lectures, "shall return here at the very earliest and not be delayed or detained." [1] We cannot infer from this or from the Elector's letter of safe conduct for Luther himself, that measures against him were anticipated at the Chapter. These documents merely prove the exceptional favour which Luther enjoyed with the reigning Prince.

Luther started from Wittenberg on April 11. Being a monk he had to make the journey on foot as far as Würzburg; after having been hospitably entertained by the Bishop, Lorenz von Bibra, who was very well disposed towards him, he proceeded to Heidelberg by coach, together with Johann Lang and some other monks. The Chapter re-elected Staupitz and made Johann Lang Rural Vicar in Luther's stead, a choice which, as already hinted, expressed approval rather than disapproval of what Luther had done. It was also very significant of the position adopted by the Augustinian Congregation, that Luther should have been permitted to preside at the Heidelberg Disputation. He advanced the theses, which have already been discussed (above, p. 317), containing the denial of free will, i.e. the most important element of his new teaching, and entrusted their defence to Master Leonard Beyer, an Augustinian of Wittenberg, who conducted the debate in the presence of the assembled Chapter and professors of Heidelberg University, who had also been invited. It is remarkable that the question of Indulgences, which was so greatly agitating the minds of all, was not touched upon in the Disputation. Perhaps it was thought better, from motives of prudence, to avoid this subject altogether at Heidelberg.

At the beginning of May Luther returned to Wittenberg by way of Würzburg and Erfurt. He took advantage of his stay at Dresden to preach a sermon before Duke George and his Court on July 25, 1518. In this sermon he spoke in such a way of "the true understanding of the Word of God," of the "Grace of Christ and eternal Predestination," and of the overcoming of the "Fear of God," that the Duke, who was a staunch adherent of the Church, was much displeased, and often declared afterwards that such teaching only made men presumptuous. The account of the sermon and of Duke George's opinion is first found in the "*Origines*

[1] Kolde, "Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation," p. 313.

Saxonicæ" [1] of George Fabricius, who died in 1571. But Luther himself refers to the opposition excited in several quarters by a controversial sermon he preached there, and remarks, cynically: such fault-finders only speak from an idle desire for praise; these gossips want everything and are able to do nothing, they are a "serpent's brood," "masked faces" whom I despise.[2]

On his return to Wittenberg he devoted himself to finishing the Resolutions on the Indulgence theses. On August 21 he sent the first printed copy to Spalatin.

These Latin *Resolutiones disputationis de virtute indulgentiarum*, which dealt exclusively with the defence of the 95 theses, were more hostile in tone towards the whole system of Indulgences than any of his previous utterances. They show Luther's fiery temper and his state of irritation even more plainly than the theses themselves. In them his new teaching on faith and grace was for the first time launched on the public in unmistakable outline. Even abroad the learned were drawn into the movement by the Latin publication which brought the matter within their range.

Together with his Resolutions, Luther published two letters, very submissive in tone, addressed, one to the Bishop of Brandenburg, as Ordinary of Wittenberg, and the other to Pope Leo X. To the Pope he said that he had ventured to address himself to him because he had learned that some persons at Rome were attempting to blacken his reputation, as though he were infringing the power of the Keys of the successor of St. Peter. He explained the reason of the controversy from his own point of view and declared: "I cannot recant." In the same letter, however, he asserts his readiness to listen to Leo's voice "as to the Voice of Christ, who presides in him and speaks through him"; one thing only he asks, viz. that the Pope will deal with him just

[1] "*Origines illustr. stirpis Saxonicæ l.* 7," Ienæ, 1597, p. 859. Seckendorf, in his "*Comment. de Lutheranismo*," relates the same from Fabricius. Both, however, make the mistake of placing the event a year too early. N. Paulus, in the "Histor.-polit. Blätter," 137, 1906, p. 51 f., doubts the credibility of the story, because Fabricius is devoid of the critical spirit. It is not clear whether Luther refers to some other sermon.

[2] To Spalatin, January 14, 1519, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 349. For further particulars with regard to the Dresden visit, which has been so much misrepresented, see below, ix. 4.

as he pleases. "Enliven me, kill me, call me back, confirm me, reject me, just as it pleases you!" [1] In the Resolutions, on the other hand, we read: "It makes no impression on me what pleases or does not please the Pope. He is a man like other men. There have been many Popes to whom not only errors and vices, but even enormities (*monstra*) were pleasing. I attend to the Pope as Pope, i.e. as he speaks in the laws of the Church, or when he decides in accordance with them, or with a Council, but not when he speaks out of his own head." [2]

At a later date he did not make any secret of the weakness of so ambiguous a position. On one occasion in later years when looking back upon the commencement of the struggle, he said he had begun the controversy "as an unreflecting and stupid Papist," that he had been drawn into the business by "his own foolishness," that his "weakness and inconsequence" had been deplorably exhibited, seeing that he then still worshipped the Pope; before this Lord of Heaven and Earth, he writes, everything still trembled, and he, the little monk, more like a corpse than a man, had only dared to advance with lamentable uncertainty and fear.[3]

In the same passage, he says: "I was certainly not glad and confident at the outset." "What my heart suffered in the first and second years, how I lay on the ground, yea, almost despaired, of that they [my rivals, the fanatics] know nothing, though they were happy to fall upon the Pope after he had been severely wounded [by me]. They have sought to take this honour to themselves, and, for all I care, they are welcome to it." "They are ignorant of the Cross and of Satan"; but I only attained "to strength and wisdom through death agonies and combats."

While Luther was superintending the printing of the Resolutions at Wittenberg he was at the same time engaged on other works.

Johann Eck had replied to his Indulgence theses by the so-called "Obelisci," which Luther met with the "Asterisci," and as Tetzel, for his part, had issued a refutation of the sermon on Indulgence and Grace, Luther brought out a

[1] May 30, 1518 (?), "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 200 f. Weim. ed., 1, p. 527 ff.

[2] "Opp. Lat. var.," 2, p. 220. Weim. ed., p. 582, Concl. 26.

[3] "Opp. Lat. var.," 4, p. 328 *seq.*, in a Preface to his Disputations.

work in reply, entitled "Freedom of the Sermon on Indulgence and Grace."

Fearing that the Pope would excommunicate him, Luther preached a sermon to the inhabitants of Wittenberg in the early summer of 1518, possibly on May 16, on the power of excommunication; what he there put forth excited widespread comment and irritation. This sermon he issued in print in August, but in an amended form. In it he says (excommunication is invalid in the case of one who honestly asserts the truth;) nevertheless, it must be obeyed. He blames the all too frequent use of excommunication, as many good Churchmen had done before him. It had been recognised and taught from Patristic times that unjust excommunication did not deprive the excommunicate of a part in the inward life of the Church (*anima ecclesiæ*). This Luther emphasises for his own party purposes, but without as yet setting up "a new view of the nature of the Church."

He says, in a letter to his elderly friend Staupitz, that, owing to the action of his adversaries, "a new flame" would surely be kindled by this sermon, though he had extolled the power of the Pope in it, as was fitting; he declares that he is the persecuted party; "but Christ still lives and reigns yesterday, to-day and for ever. My conscience tells me I have taught the truth; but it is just this which is hated whenever its name is mentioned. Pray for me that I may not rejoice overmuch nor be over-confident in myself in this trouble." He trusts to triumph, by printing the sermon referred to, over all those who had listened to it with jealousy, and maliciously misrepresented it. Yet his mood is by no means one of unmixed joy; he hints in the same letter to Staupitz at mysterious interior sufferings which weigh upon him "incomparably more heavily," so he says, than the fear of any measures Rome may take. At the same time he is quite carried away by the idea that he must, at any cost, fight against the contempt which the Romanists are heaping upon the Kingdom of Christ.[1]

Meanwhile, in March, 1518, complaints had again been carried to Rome by some Dominicans. Towards the middle of June fresh official steps were taken by Rome against Luther's person, this time without the intervention of the

[1] Sept. 1, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 223.

Order. The course of these proceedings has been made plain by recent research. The Papal Procurator Fiscal, Mario de Perusco, raised a formal charge against the monk on the suspicion of spreading heresy. By order of the Pope, the preliminary examination was conducted by the Bishop of Ascoli, Girolamo Ghinucci, as Auditor-General for suits in the Apostolic Camera, while Silvester Mazzolini of Prierio (Prierias), the Magister S. Palatii, who, like all Mayors of the Apostolic Palace, belonged to the Dominican Order, was entrusted with the task of penning a learned opinion on the questions involved.

As Prierias had already made a study of the Indulgence theses, he, as he himself says, took only three days to draw up the opinion, which, moreover, he did not intend to stand as an actual theological refutation. It was at once printed, being entitled "*In præsumptuosas M. Lutheri conclusiones de potestate papæ dialogus.*" The work was not free from exaggerations and gratuitous insults.

At the beginning of July, 1518, Luther was summoned to appear within sixty days at Rome to stand his trial. Ghinucci and Prierias sent the summons to Cardinal Cajetan, who was then stopping at Augsburg, in order that he might forward it to the Wittenberg Professor. Prierias's pamphlet accompanied it, and Luther received both together on August 7. He said at a later date in his Table-Talk, alluding to the work of the Mayor of the Apostolic Palace, that the despatch from Rome had stirred his blood to the utmost, as he had then realised that the matter was deadly earnest, since Rome was inexorable.

The very next day, with many contemptuous and disaffected remarks on the citation, he set about inducing the Elector to use his influence with the Holy See in order that judges might be appointed to try the case in Germany; he hoped to be thereby spared the dreaded journey to Rome. It was at that time that he published the sermon on excommunication referred to above. On the day following the receipt of the summons he set to work on a pamphlet in reply to the *Dialogus* of Prierias, which appeared at the end of August.[1] This Latin *Responsio* he finished in two days, thus beating Prierias, as he triumphantly informs him. It is arrogant and insulting in tone, vindicates all the

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 647 ff.

theses one by one, and asserts some of the errors contained in them in still stronger terms than before. He does not as yet deny the infallibility of the Councils, on the contrary, he explicitly admits it ;[1] neither does he in set words state that the Pope may emit false opinions when teaching on faith and morals, although in recent times both these errors have been said to be embodied in his reply.

The obscure passage regarding the possibility of the Councils and Popes erring refers to their action in ecclesiastico-political matters, as the cases instanced by Luther show more clearly, e.g. the wars of Pope Julius II and the "tyrannical acts" which he attributes to Boniface VIII.

It is true that the want of any clear admission in his reply of the doctrinal authority of the Church, his violent insistence on the Bible as interpreted by himself, and his arbitrary handling of the older theology and practice, gave cause for apprehending the worst.

Against Prierias he defends the opinion, that our Saviour commanded what was impossible because we are always subject to concupiscence ; that the sons of God are forced to do what is good rather than left to perform it of their own accord, and, for this reason, the higher theology teaches that those actions are the best which Christ works in us without our co-operation, and those the worst "which—according to the absolutely false teaching of Aristotle—we perform by our own so-called free will."

From the latter circumstance the pseudo-mystic infers that fasting, for instance, is excellent when the person who fasts is absolutely unconscious of what he is doing and thinking of something higher ; at such a moment he is furthest removed from any craving for food. Sacramental Penance, he says, is merely the commencement of penance, and zeal in its use could only be maintained by a miracle.[2]

All these ideas, which, as we know from what has gone before, give a true picture of the direction of his mind, are to be found at the beginning of the work, of which the confusion is matched only by its pretensions.

Because Prierias was a Dominican and Thomist, Luther here displays the bitterest animosity against the Thomistic school, an animosity which was henceforth never to cease, and likewise summons his national feeling as a German to help him against the Italian. In one of his letters Luther declared that he would let him see there were men in Germany well versed in the arts

[1] Cp. V. Prop., n. 3 : "*Non sum hæreticus si negativam teneo, donec determinetur a concilio.*" N. 6 : "*Ego ecclesiam . . . reprœsentative non [scio] nisi in concilio*" ; but it was incorrect "*si quidquid facit ecclesia virtualis, id est papa* (as Prierias stated), *factum ecclesiæ dicitur*" : The Pope and the Councils might err in their regulations on practical matters ("*factum ecclesiæ*).

[2] See above, p. 291.

and wily tricks of the Romans; if he continued to incense him, he would make free use of his wit and pen against him.[1]

In his reply to Prierias, Luther had referred his opponent to the Resolutions to his Indulgence theses, which were then already in print. Staupitz forwarded to Rome the copy destined for the Pope. The letters to Staupitz and Leo X, which were incorporated in the work, were dated May 30, 1518, though the printing was not finished before August 21. As the Resolutions, Luther's most important work on the question of Indulgences, obstinately confirmed the errors already expressed, more severe measures were anticipated on the part of the Curia.

In his efforts to procure the appointment of judges to try his cause in Germany, Luther sought, through the Elector, to make use of the mediation of the Emperor Maximilian. But the Emperor, who was earnestly solicitous for the welfare of religion, and at the same time was anxious to secure the Pope's favour on behalf of the election of his grandson Charles as King of Rome, wrote to Leo X, August 5, 1518, from Augsburg, that out of love for the unity of the faith he would support any measures the Pope might take against Luther.

More severe proceedings against Luther were accordingly set on foot in Rome, even before the sixty days were over. These measures are outlined in the Brief of August 23, 1518, sent to Cardinal Cajetan, the Papal Legate at the Diet of Augsburg.

In view of the notoriety of Luther's acts and teaching, with the assistance of the spiritual and secular power, Cajetan was to have him brought to Augsburg; should force have to be used, or should Luther not recant, then Cajetan was to hand him over to Rome for trial and punishment; he himself therefore was not to be the actual judge, but only to receive Luther's recantation. In the event of his presenting himself voluntarily at Augsburg and recanting, so ran the instructions, Luther was to find pardon and mercy. Should it be impossible to procure his appearance at Augsburg, then the measures provided by law and custom for such cases were to be enforced; he and his followers were to be publicly excommunicated, and the authorities in Church and State were to be forced, if neces-

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 196.

sary under pain of interdict, to seize and deliver up the excommunicate.

The Elector, Frederick the Wise, however, demanded a trial before Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg; this was to be carried out with "paternal gentleness." He would not consent to sanction any other measures. Cajetan met his wishes without being untrue either to the Pope or to himself. "A man entirely devoted to study, without much practical knowledge of the world, he was no match for such an expert politician as Frederick of Saxony." [1] On September 11 he obtained from Leo X a Brief placing in his own hands the trial and decision on Luther's case.

Thus the way was paved for Luther's historic trial at Augsburg.

Fables regarding Luther and Tetzel

Before passing on to the trial at Augsburg, we must first deal with the legends which cluster round the name of Tetzel and which were mostly started by Luther and the Papal Chamberlain, Carl von Miltitz.

We have a detailed critical monograph on Tetzel by Dr. N. Paulus: "Johann Tetzel, der Ablassprediger," Mayence, 1899, which the same author[2] has since supplemented by other publications. Paulus by his impartial research has sealed the fate of the principal legends connected with Tetzel's name.

A statement made by Luther in 1541, i.e. at the time of his most bitter polemics, has been repeated countless times since, viz. that, in 1512, at Innsbruck, Tetzel the monk was condemned by the Emperor Maximilian to be drowned in the River Inn for the crime of adultery, and that only the intervention of the Elector, Frederick the Wise, had saved him from this fate. This is an untruth which Luther first made use of in his violent pamphlet "Wider Hans Worst."[3] Before that time he had never mentioned anything of the kind. A. Berger says of the supposed condemnation at Innsbruck: "Paulus has finally disposed of the infamous tale of adultery and no one will ever venture to bring it forward again."[4] Before this Th. Brieger had declared: "It is high time that this story which has been questioned even

[1] See Pastor, "History of the Popes," English translation, volume vii., p. 372.

[2] N. Paulus, "Die deutschen Dominikaner im Kampfe gegen Luther," 1903, pp. 1–9, "Johann Tetzel"; also in the "Katholik," 1899, 1, pp. 484–510; 1901, 1, pp. 453–68, 554–70.

[3] "Werke," Erl. ed., 26, p. 50.

[4] "Hist. Vierteljahrsschr. für Gesch.," 5, 1902, p. 256.

by Protestants should disappear."[1] No authority whatever can be quoted for representing in an unfavourable light the private life of this man, who stood so prominently before the public. Concerning the supposed Innsbruck incident, Fr. Dibelius, Superintendent at Dresden, says: "among the imperfections and crimes alleged against Tetzel by his enemies the charge of immorality cannot be sustained."[2]

The shortsighted Papal Chamberlain Miltitz, in his eagerness to secure peace on any terms, in the first years of the Indulgence controversy made common cause with those opponents of Tetzel who brought forward baseless charges of immorality against him after he had withdrawn, at the end of 1518, to the pious seclusion of his Dominican priory at Leipzig. In mid-January, 1519, Tetzel had to endure the most bitter reproaches from the ill-informed Papal agent. But, as Oscar Michael remarks, "all attempts to set up Miltitz as a reliable witness will be in vain."[3] "What Miltitz relates of Tetzel is altogether unworthy of credence." Another Protestant writer had already before that expressed himself likewise.[4]

With regard to the matter of Tetzel's sermons above referred to, it is chiefly to Luther that we owe the charge of flagrant errors and gross abuses in his proclamation of the Indulgence. "He wrote," so Luther explained to his friends, "that an Indulgence is a reconciliation between God and man and takes effect even though a man performs no penance, and manifests neither contrition nor sorrow."[5] "Tetzel put it so crudely that no one could fail to understand his meaning."[6]

In his pamphlet of 1541 Luther says: "He sold grace for money at the highest price he could." He then instances six "horrible, dreadful articles" which the avaricious monk had preached.

One of these which extols his Indulgence contains an offensive statement respecting Our Lady; another declares that, according to Tetzel, "it was not necessary to feel sorrow or pain or contrition for sin, but whoever bought the Indulgence, or the Indulgence-letters," had also bought an Indulgence for "future sins"; three of the articles say he had magnified the effects of the Indulgence by the use of unseemly comparisons, and finally, one states

[1] "Theol. Literaturztg.," 1900, p. 84.

[2] In a lecture on Tetzel's Life and Teaching, "Dresdener Journal," 1903, March 20.

[3] "Munchener Allgemeine Zeitung," 1901, April 18, Beil., No. 88.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1900, May 14, Beil., No. 110. Cp. a like statement by a non-Catholic critic in the "Frankfurter Zeitung," 1899, October 8, No. 279.

[5] "Werke," Erl. ed., 60, p. 239; cp. p. 271 f.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

that his teaching was that embodied in the ribald rhyme: "As soon as money in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory's fire springs."

As a matter of fact, the accusations brought against Tetzel, of having sold forgiveness of sins for money without requiring contrition, and of having even been ready to absolve from future sins in return for a money payment, are, as N. Paulus, and others before him, pointed out, utterly unjust.[1] Even Carlstadt, after he had gone over to the hostile camp of the new teaching, admitted that the Indulgence sermons, including those of Tetzel, were in agreement with the generally accepted teaching of the Church; of the enormities just referred to he knows nothing. Above all, Tetzel's own writings, likewise his instructions and also the testimony of strangers, all speak in his favour. "The Indulgence," Tetzel says in his "Vorlegung," "remits only the pain [i.e. the penalty] of sins which have been repented of and confessed." "No one merits an Indulgence unless he is in a truly contrite state."[2] Those who procured a Confession-letter received, according to an ancient usage, with the same letter permission to select a suitable confessor; for this an alms was given. The confessor was able to absolve, after a good confession, from all sins, even in reserved cases, and to impart a Plenary Indulgence by virtue of the Papal authorisation.

Tetzel was able with the help of official witnesses to refute the calumny with regard to Mary in his eulogy of the Indulgence. There can, however, be no doubt that he brought the pecuniary side of the Indulgence too much into the foreground. Another Dominican, a contemporary of his, Johann Lindner, criticises his behaviour as follows: Dr. Johann Tetzel of Pirna, of the Order of Preachers, from the Leipzig priory, a world-renowned preacher, proclaimed the Jubilee Year [Jubilee Indulgence] at Naumburg Leipzig, Magdeburg, Zwickau, Bautzen, Görlitz, Cologne, Halle and many other places. . . . His teaching found favour with many; but he devised unheard-of ways of raising money, was far too liberal in conferring offices, put up far too many public crosses [as a sign of the Indulgence-preaching] in towns and villages, which caused scandal and bred complaints among the people and brought the spiritual treasury into disrepute."[3]

Finally the last of the "horrible articles" mentioned above does to some extent approach the truth. The saying about the money in the coffer cannot, indeed, be traced to Tetzel's own lips, yet in his sermons he advocated a certain opinion held by some Schoolmen (though in no sense a doctrine of the Church), viz. that an indulgence gained for the departed was at once and infallibly applied to this or that soul for whom it was destined.

[1] Cp. also N. Paulus's article on the remitting of future sins in "Köln. Volkszeitung," 1905, Liter. Beilage, No. 43.

[2] "Vorlegung wyder einen vormessen Sermon vom Ablass," etc. Without place or year (Frankfurt, 1518, 4to, 15 Bl.).

[3] Menckenius, "Scriptores rer. germ.," t. 2, Lips., 1728, p. 1486 Cp. N. Paulus, "Die deutschen Dominikaner," p. 7 f.

This view was not supported by the Papal Bulls of Indulgence, and Luther was not justified in asserting at a later date that the Pope had actually taught this.[1] Great theologians, such as Cardinal Cajetan, for instance, even then expressed themselves against such a view, which now is universally recognised as untenable. It was the wish of Cajetan that no faith should be given those preachers who taught such extravagances. "Preachers speak in the name of the Church,"[2] he wrote, "only so long as they proclaim the teaching of Christ and the Church; but if for purposes of their own, they teach that about which they know nothing and which is only their own imagination, they cannot be regarded as mouthpieces of the Church; no one must be surprised if such as these fall into error." It is true, however, that even the more highly placed Indulgence Commissaries did not scruple, in their official proclamations, to set forth as certain this doubtful scholastic opinion. It is no wonder that Tetzel in his popular appeals seized upon it with avidity, for, in spite of certain gifts, he was no great theologian. He not only taught the certain and immediate liberation of the soul in the above sense but also the erroneous proposition that a Plenary Indulgence for the departed could be obtained without contrition and penance on the part of the living, simply by means of a money payment.

Some of Tetzel's more recent champions have insinuated that the unfavourable opinion concerning his teaching rests merely on witnesses who reported on his sermons from hearsay without having themselves been present. As a matter of fact, however, the accusations do not rest merely on such testimony, but more especially on Tetzel's own theses, or "Anti-theses," as he called them, on his "Vorlegung" against Luther and on his second set of theses. This is reinforced by the official instructions on the Indulgence to which he was bound to conform. That a money payment alone is necessary for obtaining an Indulgence for the departed is indeed stated—though wrongly—in the instructions of Bomhauer and also in those of Arcimboldi and Albert of Brandenburg. The Anti-theses above mentioned were publicly defended by Tetzel on January 20, 1518, at the University of Frankfort on the Oder; they thus belong to Tetzel, though in reality they were drawn up by Conrad Wimpina, a Professor of Theology in that town. Paulus published a new edition of the Anti-theses, which were already known, from the original broadsheet which he discovered in the Court Library at Munich.[3] Four witnesses to the inaccuracy of Tetzel's sermons must be mentioned: firstly, the Town Clerk of Görlitz, Johann Hass; then Bertold Pirstinger, Bishop of Chiemsee and author of the

[1] "Werke," Erl ed., 65, p. 78: "The Pope had sternly commanded the angels to carry forthwith the souls of the departed to heaven." Just as Tetzel taught: "As soon as the penny rattles in the box, the soul flies straight from Purgatory to Heaven."

[2] November 20, 1519. "Opuscula," Lugd., 1558, p. 121. N. Paulus, "Tetzel," p. 165. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 171 f.

"Tewtsche Theologey"; thirdly, the Saxon Franciscan Franz Polygranus; and lastly, Duke George of Saxony. They confirm the statements taken from the above sources, and though their assertions do not rest on what they themselves heard, yet they may be considered as the echo of actual hearers.

In connection with the above "horrible, terrible articles" taken from Tetzel's teaching, Luther makes a statement with regard to his own position and knowledge at that time, which, notwithstanding the sacred affirmation with which he introduces it, is of very doubtful veracity.

"So truly as I have been saved by my Lord Christ," he says of the beginning of the Indulgence controversy in 1517, "I knew nothing of what an Indulgence was, and no more did anyone else." [1]

It is possible that in 1541, when, as an elderly man, he wrote these words, they may have appeared to him to be true, but the sources from which history is taken demand that he himself as well as his Catholic contemporaries should be protected against such a charge of ignorance. His assertion has been defended by some Protestants on the assumption that his ignorance was only concerning the recipients of the revenues proceeding from the Indulgence. But why force his words? They refer, as the whole context shows, to the theological doctrine of Indulgences.

We need hardly remind our readers that the conviction that Luther was thoroughly well acquainted with the Catholic doctrine on Indulgences can be demonstrated by his own sermon on Indulgences of the year 1516.[2] He there shows himself perfectly capable of distinguishing between the essentials of the Church's doctrine and the obscure and difficult questions which the theologians were wont to propound in their discussions. With regard to these latter, and these only, he admitted his uncertainty, as did other theologians too. This was as little a disgrace to him as the obscurity surrounding certain points was to the theology of the Church. But it is quite another matter when he says he did not even know what an Indulgence was. That no one else knew either, is a statement disposed of by his own sermon of 1516 and the various theological tracts on this subject. We need only recall the explanations of Cardinal Cajetan, of the Augustinian theologian and preacher Johann Paltz and of the continuator of the work of Gabriel Biel—so much studied among the Augustinians—Wendelin Steinbach, who succeeded Biel as professor at Tübingen. Biel himself had written on the question of Indulgences for the departed, and, in his appendices on this subject, had expressed himself quite correctly.

Of the older theologians who preceded those we have men-

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 26, p. 53.

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 65 *seq.* For the contents, see above, p. 324 f.

tioned in a right appreciation of this subject, we may enumerate the Franciscans Richard of Middletown, Petrus de Palude and Franciscus Mayron; the Dominicans Heinrich Kalteisen of Coblentz, whose writings on Indulgences have been re-edited by Dr. N. Paulus. All these treated the subject in accordance with the doctrine of St. Thomas of Aquin and St. Bonaventure. Kalteisen in his work, written in 1448 while he was Magister S. Palatii, refers expressly to St. Thomas, whose opinion on questions not yet definitively settled was ever considered the best. To mention only one point, all agree in interpreting the old expression (*remissio peccatorum*) usual in Indulgence-formulæ, as meaning a remission of the temporal punishment. Suarez, at a later date, could well refer not only to "all theologians," but also to "all 'Summists,'" i.e. to all those who had compiled moral Sums from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century.[1]

Thus, in 1517, the theological side of the question of Indulgences was quite clear, and the statements made by Luther at a later date are not deserving of credit. It was Luther's false ideas on other points of theology and his determination to put an immediate end to the abuses connected with Indulgences, which led him in 1517 to make a general attack, even though partly veiled, on the whole ecclesiastical system of Indulgences.

If we keep this in view, a statement of Luther's to which a false interpretation has been frequently given, becomes clear. According to an account given by Hieronymus Emser, he wrote to Tetzel at a time when the latter was suffering keenly under the reproaches heaped upon him: Not to worry, for it was not he who had begun the business, but that the child had quite another father.[2]

This sentence has repeatedly been taken as a testimony against himself on Luther's part, as though by it he had intended to say: My new opinions and the desire to change the ecclesiastical order of things were the cause of my coming forward, the Indulgence was only an idle pretext. Luther's defenders, on the other hand, took it to mean: "The child has, it is true, another father, viz. God Himself Who took pity on His Church, and forced Luther to come forward." Both interpretations are wrong, and the

[1] Cp. the article by Dr. N. Paulus: "Johann v. Paltz über Ablass und Reue" in the "Zeitschrift für kath. theol.," 23, 1899, p. 48 ff. He treats in the same review of Wendelin Steinbach, 24, 1900, p. 262: of Richard of Middletown, *ibid.*, p. 12. See Kalteisen's writing, *ibid.*, 27, 1903, p. 368 ff. We also possess a treatise on Indulgences by the secular priest Nic. of Dinkelsbühl, professor at the University.

[2] Emser, "Auff des Stieres tzu Wiettenberg wiettende Replica," Bl. A. 3′. Cp. "Luthers Briefe," ed. de Wette, volume vi., K. Seidemann, p. 18, where it is stated: "Luther's letter was in Emser's hands."

following is the meaning as determined by the context: The attack which Luther made upon Tetzel was really directed against the authorities of the Church, against the Pope and Archbishop Albert of Brandenburg; these, not Tetzel, were the "father of the child," and responsible for what afterwards happened.[1]

Tetzel died August 11, 1519, broken down by the weight of the accusations brought against him and by the sight of the mischief which had been wrought, and was buried before the High Altar of the Dominican Church at Leipzig.

To describe the unfortunate monk as the "cause" of the whole movement which began 1517 is, in view of what has been stated in the preceding chapters, the merest legend. Notwithstanding the efforts which Luther made to represent the matter in this or a similar light, it has been clearly [2] proved that his own spiritual development was the "cause," or at least the principal cause, though other factors may have co-operated more or less.

If we turn our attention to the external circumstances and the reasons which led to Tetzel's Indulgence-preaching, we shall find that recent research has brought to light numerous facts to supplement those already known, and also various elements which dispose of the legends hitherto current.

2. The Collections for St. Peter's in History and Legend

The scholarly, well-documented work of Aloysius Schulte has thrown a clearer light upon the question of the St. Peter's Indulgence and the part which the Archbishop of Mayence and Magdeburg played in the same (cp. above, p. 327).[3]

In his later days Luther spread the following version of the origin of Tetzel's Indulgence-preaching: Albert of Mayence selected the "great clamourer" Tetzel as preacher

[1] N. Paulus, "Tetzel," p. 169.

[2] As he declares in "Werke," Erl. ed., 26, p. 50 ff.; "The first, real and actual beginning of the Lutheran uproar" was Tetzel's preaching, and "the fame of it did not please me at all, for I did not know what an Indulgence was, and the song was getting too high for my voice," it was the Bishop of Mayence who really commenced the affair through "the cut-purse, Tetzel"; he says in his Table-Talk: "If the Pope had only dismissed the Indulgence-mongers, I would willingly have been silent," "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 3, p. 195.

[3] "Die Fugger in Rom 1495–1523," Bd. 1, Darstellung; Bd. 2, Urkunden, Leipzig, 1904.

of the Indulgence in order, with one half of the proceeds of the business, which was the part of the spoils to be allotted to the Archbishop, to pay for the pallium which Rome had sent him; the cost of the pallium was said to have amounted to 26,000 or even 30,000 gulden; the Fuggers advanced this money to Archbishop Albert and then he, with Tetzel, "sent forth the Fugger cut-purses throughout the land." "The Pope, too, had his finger in the pie, and had seen that the [other] half went towards the building of St. Peter's in Rome."[1]

At a later date some of the Protestants even averred that Tetzel "collected in the first and only year [of his preaching] one hundred thousand gulden."

In the above statements there is a mixture of truth and falsehood. Various particulars, discreditable to both Rome and Mayence, had reached Luther by a sure hand; for others he drew on his own imagination.[2]

As early as 1519 he says in his memoranda for the negotiations with Miltitz: "The Pope, as his office required, should either have forbidden and hindered the Bishop of Magdeburg [Albert] from seeking so many bishoprics for himself, or have bestowed them upon him freely as he had himself received them from the Lord. But as the Pope encouraged the Bishop's ambition and gratified his own greed for gold by taking so many thousand gulden for the palliums, i.e. for the Bishops' mantles, and for the dispensation, he had, I said [this is Luther], forced and instigated the Bishop of Magdeburg to coin money out of the Indulgence. . . . Then I became impatient with such a lamentable business, and also, more especially, with the greed of the Florentines, who persuaded the good, simple Pope to do as they wished, and drove him into the greatest danger and misfortune."[3] Luther was well-informed regarding what was going on in Rome, probably owing to his having friends at the Court of Albert. He refers in 1518 to an "*epistola satis erudita*" from Rome which had come into his hands, and which inveighed in the strongest terms against the Florentines who surrounded the Pope, as the "most avaricious of men"; "they abuse," so he writes, "the Pope's good nature in order to fill the bottomless pit of their passionate love of money."[4]

With regard to the statement, that Archbishop Albert had petitioned the Pope for the Indulgence in order to pay off the debt he had incurred by receiving the See of Mayence in addition

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 26, p. 52.

[2] We shall come back later to the sources from which he drew his information.

[3] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 342.

[4] To Spalatin, September 2, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 227. Cp. Com. in Ep. ad. Gal., 3, p. 133.

to that of Magdeburg and also the expenses of the pallium, it has now been ascertained (the fact is certainly no less to Rome's discredit) that, in reality, it was the Roman authorities, who, for financial reasons, offered the Indulgence to the Archbishop; Albert was to receive from the proceeds a compensation of 10,000 ducats, which sum, in addition to the ordinary fees, had been demanded of him on the occasion of his confirmation as Archbishop of Mayence on account of the dispensation necessary for combining the two Archiepiscopal Sees; one half of the proceeds of the Indulgence was to be made over to him for the needs of the Archdiocese of Mayence, the other half was to go towards the rebuilding of St. Peter's, for which object a collection had already commenced in other countries and was being promoted by the preaching of the Indulgence.

Regarding the whole matter we learn the following details.

When Bishop Albert of Brandenburg, the brother of the Brandenburg Elector, Joachim I, was chosen Archbishop in 1514 by the Cathedral Chapter of Mayence he was faced by great difficulties, financial as well as ecclesiastical. Was it likely that he would obtain from Rome his confirmation as Archbishop of Mayence, seeing that he was already Archbishop of Magdeburg and at the same time administrator of the diocese of Halberstadt? Would it be possible for him to raise the customary large sum to be paid for his confirmation and for the pallium, seeing that the Archdiocese of Mayence, owing to two previous vacancies in rapid succession, had already been obliged to pay this sum twice within ten years, and was thus practically bankrupt? The sum necessary, which was the same in the case of Treves and Cologne, amounted on each occasion to about 14,000 ducats. With regard to the confirmation-fees for the See of Mayence and the expenses of the pallium, the Elector Joachim, who, for political reasons, was extremely anxious to see his brother in possession of the electoral dignity of Mayence, promised to defray the same, and thus the Mayence election took place on March 9. The Archbishop-elect borrowed, on May 15 of the same year, 21,000 ducats from the Fuggers, the great Augsburg bankers—no doubt with his brother's concurrence—in order to be able to meet at Rome the necessary outlay for his confirmation and pallium.

Grave doubts, however, were entertained in the Papal Curia as to whether, according to canon law, the above bishopries might be held by the same person. Two of the offices in question were archbishoprics, and, hitherto, in spite of the prevalence of the abuse of placing several croziers in one hand, two archbishoprics had never been held by one man. Besides, the candidate was only in his twenty-fourth year.

An undesirable way out of the difficulty of obtaining the necessary dispensation for holding the three ecclesiastical dignities presented itself. An official of the Papal Dataria informed the ambassador from Brandenburg, that if Albert could be induced to pay 10,000 ducats beyond the customary fees "this

should not be looked upon as a composition [tax], as His Holiness, in return for the same, would grant a ten-year Plenary Indulgence in the shape of a Jubilee in the diocese of Mayence."[1] This proposal emanated from the Papal officials, Leo X himself as yet refusing to hear anything about the money question. After lengthy negotiations the proposed plan was accepted by the principals on both sides in the following amended shape: The Indulgence, one half of the proceeds of which was to be devoted to the building of St. Peter's, and the other to the Archbishop of Mayence, was to be proclaimed for eight years, not only in the diocese of Mayence, but throughout the ecclesiastical provinces of Mayence and Magdeburg as well as in the domains of the house of Brandenburg (i.e. throughout almost the half of Germany, owing to the vastness of the province of Mayence); the proceeds were to be divided into two parts in the manner mentioned above, as alms for the erection of St. Peter's and as an income for the Archbishop of Mayence. (The Pope, in his simple goodness of heart, was gradually induced, by political considerations, to agree to the proposal.) On July 19 the matter was finally decided in Consistory. Thus no actual indemnity was paid for the dispensation (as Luther asserted) beyond the Indulgence money and the alms for building. Pope Leo X confirmed the *supplica* in question on August 1, 1514. The public Indulgence Bull, however, *Sacrosancti Salvatoris*, is dated March 31, 1515.

The branch house of the Fuggers at Rome at once paid the sum of 10,000 ducats to the Pope. As the other fees for confirmation and the pallium had already been paid, the induction of Albert as Archbishop of Mayence took place on August 18, 1514, no difficulty being raised as to his retaining the two other Sees.

Every Catholic at the present day will agree with H. Schrörs that "this manner of acquiring benefices with the assistance of an Indulgence was unworthy and reprehensible."[2] It brings before our eyes an instance of the ecclesiastical abuses prevalent just before the Reformation, and which cannot be sufficiently deplored. "Although Albert's confirmation may not have been, strictly speaking, simoniacal," says a learned Catholic reviewer of Schulte's works,[3] "yet there is a strong suspicion of simony

[1] Schulte, *ibid.*, 2, p. 96.

[2] H. Schrörs on Schulte's work in the "Wissentschaftl. Beilage zur Germania," 1904, Nos. 14 and 15, p. 299.

[3] N. Paulus in the "Köln. Volksztg.," 1904, April 24, No. 339. Schrörs, *ibid.*, 292 f., is right in excluding any simoniacal character from the business, whether considered in the nature of a composition (which it was not intended to be) or as the bestowal of an Indulgence with a building alms attached to it. In the case of compositions (for the bestowal of bishoprics) the fees customary from ancient times are not a "compensation for a spiritual object, or for an object connected with spiritual things, but a debt incurred on the occasion of the bestowal of something spiritual." In the granting of Indulgences, however, a condition of the imparting of any spiritual favour was always some gift

about it ; at any rate, it was an extremely discreditable business, and we may well look upon it as a Divine Judgment that the Mayence Indulgence should have been the immediate occasion of the great religious upheaval for which many other factors had been paving the way." "The greater part of the blame rests with the Hohenzollern brothers, who approached the Curia with such an exorbitant demand for the cumulation of benefices."[1]

"Looked at in itself, the allocation of Indulgences, like that for St. Peter's, is to some extent justified by the fact, that it was customary in the Middle Ages to make the granting of privileges an opportunity for the giving of special alms, and that the position of the Papacy, as head of the Church, gave it the right to share in the privileges of its members. On this was based the whole system of taxes levied by the Curia on the bestowal of any office, inasmuch as the tax was really a part of the income of the Curial officials ; whereas, however, Rome had hitherto been content with one-third of the proceeds of an Indulgence, this was now increased to one-half."[2] "Nor was it right if, as was probably the case, the Indulgence-preachers did not explain to the people how one part of their alms was to be disposed of, but left them in the belief that it was all to be devoted to the object announced [i.e. the rebuilding of St. Peter's]."[3]

Finally, the too frequent tendering of Indulgences towards the close of the Middle Ages must be noted as a regrettable abuse. The collections made for Indulgences granted for all sorts of ecclesiastical purposes were so numerous, that loud complaints were raised by the Rulers about the heavy burden thus imposed upon their people.

The Indulgence for St. Peter's followed many others and was first started under Pope Julius II. In this case the importance to the whole of Christendom of the erection of a new church over the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles may have afforded some justification. Originally intended to last only for twelve months, the Indulgence was extended from year to year.

As regards its administration, Papal commissaries had been appointed for the proclamation of the Indulgence and for making the collections. Thus the Franciscan Observantines under the Vicar-General of the Order were entrusted with the so-called Cismontane provinces, comprising Italy and the Slavonian regions to the east of Europe, including Hungary, the German

to be devoted to a special pious object. "Monetary self-denial for the sake of the Roman building fund was an integral part of the Indulgence," "according to the Papal *motu proprio* it was justified by the unusual length and irrevocable nature of the Indulgence." (Schrörs.) "The purchase or sale of spiritual things for money or money's worth, never entered the minds of those who made use of the Indulgence." So writes O. Pfülf in the "Stimmen aus Maria-Laach," 67, 1904, p. 322.

[1] Kalkoff, "Forschungen," p. 379. Cp. Schrörs, *ibid.*, p. 299.

[2] Schrörs, *ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* With regard to this matter, the silence of the Indulgence Instructions of Constance, dated 1513, is significant.

portions of Moravia, Bohemia, Silesia and Prussia and likewise Switzerland. In Switzerland the preacher was the celebrated Franciscan Bernardin Samson. Other special commissaries were distributed throughout the west of Europe, according to the political divisions; thus we find them established by Papal appointment in Spain, Brittany, the British Isles, Savoy, Burgundy, Scandinavia, and in the Spanish colonies in America.

There had been some delay in introducing this arrangement into Germany as the country was already exhausted by large collections made for the Teutonic Order and the armies which it had been compelled to raise for the defence of the Catholic countries and Christian civilisation, and also by other taxes. In 1514 the time seemed, however, to have arrived. In this year, the same in which the bargain was struck with Albert of Brandenburg, a Chief Commissary, in the person of a cleric at the Papal Court, Gianangelo Arcimboldi, was appointed for the provinces of Cologne, Treves, Salzburg, Bremen, Besançon and other dioceses; Mayence, on the other hand, with the other portions of Germany before mentioned, was reserved for Albert as Commissary-General.

The Chief Commissary appointed sub-commissaries and preachers. Tetzel was chosen by Albert of Mayence as sub-Commissary. He had, before this, acted as sub-Commissary (1505–6) for the preaching of the Indulgence on behalf of the Teutonic Order in the dioceses of Merseburg and Naumburg, and later had worked in many other parts of Germany for the same Indulgence. In 1516 he had been appointed by Arcimboldi as sub-Commissary and preacher in the diocese of Meissen. It was in the beginning of 1517 that Archbishop Albert took him into his service as sub-Commissary and preacher for the dioceses of Halberstadt and Magdeburg.[1] In this capacity he came in the spring, 1517, to Jüterbog, in the neighbourhood of Wittenberg. While subordinate to Archbishop Albert he was at the same time, like his employer, under the orders of a Roman Commission; all the Chief Commissaries, Albert as well as Arcimboldi, were subordinate to a Papal Commission, at the head of which was the Pope's Master of the Treasury.

The appointment of Albert as Chief Commissary had been made under the impression that the standing of this powerful German Prince of the Church would contribute to the success of the undertaking, and influence even those who were not in favour of the scheme. Yet Albert's own envoys, when the handing over the Indulgence was first mooted, openly declared that they were not inclined to agree to accepting the Indulgence as "discontent, and perhaps something worse, might be the result,"[2] a fear which events were sadly to justify.

In the end the yield did not reach expectations; this is plain from the accounts now available. The "hundred thousand

[1] Cf. F. Herrmann, "Tetzels Eintritt in den Dienst des Erzbischofs Albrecht," in "Zeitschrift für Kirchengesch.," 23, 1902, p. 263 ff.

[2] Schulte, "Die Fugger in Rom 1495–1523," 2, p. 98.

gulden" which Tetzel was said to have collected in one year are a mere fiction. This tale was spread abroad in 1721 by J. E. Kapp, and before that by J. Wolfius (1600), and would appear to date from a chance word let fall by Paul Lang, the Benedictine (1520).[1] We are, however, in possession of more authentic details since an exact account was kept.

This account of the collections was made in the following manner: the money-boxes were opened and the contents counted in the presence of witnesses, and the statement of the amount certified by a notary. Representatives of both parties—Archbishop Albert and the Fugger bank—were present, and kept an account, half of the proceeds being paid by the Fuggers to the Curia at Rome for St. Peter's, and the other half to the Archbishop of Mayence. It was a good thing and a guarantee against mismanagement, that, at any rate in the case of the Mayence Indulgence and that for St. Peter's, a reliable banking-house of world-wide fame and conducted on business principles (even though Luther styles the Fuggers cut-purses), should have thus undertaken the supervision of the accounts, however distasteful it may seem to have left to bank officials the distribution of the Indulgence-letters from the very commencement of the preaching.

How much did the proceeds amount to? The Mayence Indulgence was preached only from the beginning of 1517 to 1518, the rise of the religious conflict interfering with its continuance. Schulte has, however, put us in possession of two considerable statements of accounts concerning this period, taken from the archives of the Vatican. That of May 5, 1519, deals with the Papal half of the Indulgence money which flowed in from the various dioceses of the ecclesiastical province of Mayence during 1517 and 1518, and was handed over by the house of Fugger. This half amounted to 1643 gulden 45 kreuzer. A like sum was handed over to Albert, as has been proved by Schulte from a document in the State archives at Magdeburg. The other statement of account is dated June 16 of the same year and places the sum total of the money received from the ecclesiastical province of Magdeburg at 5149 gulden, according to which each half amounted to 2574½ gulden. If we assume these sums, viz. 8436 gulden, to have been the gross proceeds of the Indulgence enterprise, and if we take into consideration the charges, comparatively high, for those engaged in the work, then the amount cannot be described as large. Nor would the Archbishop of Mayence have received entire the 4218 gulden constituting his share, as, according to an arrangement made with the Emperor, he had been obliged to make him a yearly payment of 1000 gulden from the net profits. Thus only 3218 gulden would have remained to him. This would have com-

[1] N. Paulus, in the "Köln. Volksztg.," *ibid.*, who gives the quotations from Kapp and Wolfius. Paul Lang says, in Pistorius Struvius, "Rer. germ. script.," 1, p. 1281, Luther, by his interference with the preaching of the Indulgence, had, "*ut fama fuit*," caused the Romans in one year a loss of 100,000 gulden.

pensated him but poorly for the enormous payments he had made to Rome. As regards the sums mentioned we must bear in mind the vast difference between the value of money then and now; the buying value of money, at a moderate estimate, was then three times greater than to-day. Since the researches undertaken by Schulte, other accounts, not included in the above, concerning the revenues produced by the Indulgence have been discovered, "a proof that an exact estimate of the whole proceeds of the Mayence-Magdeburg Indulgence is as yet out of the question."[1]

Another fable which owes its origin to the anti-Catholic inventions of the sixteenth century has it that Leo X did not devote the results of the Mayence Indulgence to the building of St. Peter's, but poured them into the already well-filled coffers of his sister Maddalena, who had married a Cibo. There is no proof for this assertion. Felice Cortelori, the well-known keeper of the Vatican archives, declared, even in his day, that he was unable to find any confirmation of this story, which should therefore be rejected as fabulous, and Schulte, as a result of his own investigations, agrees with him.[2]

Owing to the abuses and the change in public opinion, the amalgamation of spiritual and temporal interests, as it appeared in the Indulgence collections, became untenable in the course of the sixteenth century. The Council of Trent did well, though rather late in the day, in relegating, as far as possible, the system of Indulgences to the spiritual domain, its original and special sphere, that of benefiting souls. But one who knows how to view the movement of the times and the development of the Church's life from the standpoint of history, will be able to put its true value upon this apparently strange union of the temporal and spiritual in the Indulgence system of the Late Middle Ages, and will give due consideration to the fact, that in those days the spiritual and temporal domains were more closely connected than at any other period. They were thrown into mutual dependence, each supporting the other; that disadvantages as well as benefits resulted, was of course inevitable.

The preaching of Indulgences in accordance with the spirit of the Church, when rightly carried out, might be compared with popular missions of the present day. Besides the less desirable preachers many able and zealous men came forward wherever the cross, or the so-called Vesper-Bild, was erected as a sign of the preaching of the Indulgence. The crowds who streamed together, listened to the admonitions of speakers previously unknown to them and usually belonging to some Order, with more attention than at the ordinary religious services; many were led to a sense of their sins and to amend their life, as they could not receive the Indulgence without an inward change of heart; they were also glad to take advantage of the presence of strange confessors

[1] F. Herrmann, "Mainz-Magdeburgische Ablasskistenvisitationsprotokolle," in "Archiv für Reformationsgesch.," 6, 1909 (pp. 361–84), p. 364 f., where the new accounts in question are quoted.

[2] Schulte, *ibid.*, 1, p. 173

provided with ample faculties, to unburden their consciences by a good confession. The alms seemed little to them in comparison with the spiritual gain. And as hundreds came and experienced a similar spiritual renewal, their very multitude fired them with a common impulse to persevere in what was good. The researches of historians have hitherto been directed too much towards the abuses and outward disorders which accompanied these popular practices, which were for so long a great help to religion. It would be no loss if in future, so far as the special accounts which have been handed down admit, historians were to dwell more on the ordinary and little-noticed good results effected by Indulgences since they were first started.[1]

3. The Trial at Augsburg (1518)

In the course of September, 1518, Luther received the citation to appear before Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg, as had been agreed with the Elector Frederick; already, on August 25, the General of the Augustinians had, in accordance with the earlier and more stringent instructions from Rome to Cajetan, forwarded an order to the Saxon Provincial Gerard Hecker, to seize Luther and keep him in custody. At the end of September Luther set out for Augsburg, where he arrived, with a recommendation from the Elector and an Imperial safe conduct, on October 7.

He had started on the journey with great inward tremors and was a prey to the same violent agitation at Augsburg. At a later date he attributes the evil thoughts which plagued him to the influence of a demon.[2] He seems from the first to have been determined to carry his cause with a high hand, as ostensibly that of Jesus Christ. He becomes more and more convinced of his mission from above, a persuasion which takes possession of his soul with suggestive force.

In the fragment of a lost letter from Nuremberg we find him writing of his journey on October 3–4, 1518, to his Wittenberg friends whom he wishes to encourage to remain steadfast. Faint-hearted people, so he says, had tried to dissuade him from continuing his journey, "but I stand fast; let the Will of the Lord be done; even at Augsburg, even in the midst of His enemies, Christ still reigns . . . Christ shall live though Martin and every other sinner perish; the God of my Salvation shall be exalted. Farewell and be steadfast, stand upright because it is necessary either to be rejected by man or by God, but God is true and every

[1] Cp. N. Paulus, "Ablasspredigten des ausgehenden Mittelalters," in the "Liter. Beilage der Köln. Volksztg.," 1910, No. 11.

[2] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 202. Cp. "Theol. Studien und Kritiken," 1882, p. 692.

man a liar."[1] He certainly did not treat the matter lightly. To attribute hypocrisy to him, as though he merely played a part, would be to do him an injustice. It is true there are recent writers who look upon him as a mere comedian, but it would be nearer the mark to compare him to John Hus on his journey to the Council of Constance. Like him, he looked forward to death without any inclination to recant. The thought passed through him, he once said later: "Now I must die," and he pictured to himself "what a shame that would be for his parents."[2]

The two letters he addressed to Spalatin and Melanchthon a few days after his arrival in Augsburg and before his first examination, gave proof of the strange mystical tendency which also appears in the fragment mentioned above; they show how he overcomes the inward voice which urges him to submit, and also the importunities of his anxious friends; they also show how, even then, he was prepared to take a certain step, should the demands appear to him too great: "I shall assuredly appeal to a General Council."[3] He admits that he was "wavering between hope and fear" and, in order to stimulate his own courage, he draws a picture in these letters of two of the terrifying qualities of these "Italians" before whose representative (i.e. Cajetan) he is to defend himself.

We must try to place ourselves in his position and to appreciate his prejudices.

In the first place, he relentlessly accuses his adversaries of avarice and greed in everything; unfortunately his knowledge of the Indulgence business had furnished sufficient cause for reproaches and complaints against the Church authorities in that respect.[4] Secondly, he finds fault with the "ignorance" of his opponents, and here he undoubtedly excites himself quite wrongly and unnecessarily over their supposed senseless and one-sided Scholasticism. In his letter to Melanchthon he exclaims, as though to reassure himself: "Italy lies in Egyptian darkness, her animosity to learning and culture is unbounded. So greatly do they misapprehend Christ and all that is Christ's. And yet these are our teachers and masters in faith and morals. The anger of God is thus fulfilled in us where He says: 'I will give children to be their princes, and the effeminate shall rule over them.' Good-bye, my Philip, and turn aside God's anger by holy prayers." The supposed want of sympathy with learning and culture of which Luther accuses the Italians in this letter to Philip Melanchthon is surely most untrue, and was no doubt intended to strengthen Melanchthon, the weak and wavering Humanist, in his allegiance to Luther's party, for Luther, notwithstanding his anxieties, had not lost his cunning. The reproach against

[1] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 238.

[2] "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 2, p. 175.

[3] To Spalatin from Augsburg, October 10, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 242.

[4] *Ibid.*, "*Ecclesia Romana auro insatiabiliter eget et vorando assidue sitim auget.*"

Italy and Rome, where at that time Humanism was flourishing as nowhere else, can at most only apply to the stiffness of the old debased Scholasticism, and perhaps to a certain backwardness in biblical studies. Such blemishes afforded him a welcome handle. "I will rather perish," he assures Melanchthon, the enthusiastic scholar, "than withdraw my true theses and help to destroy learning." "I go, should it please the Lord, to be sacrificed for you and your young men."

He still clings to the idea of being one with the Church in his theological views. "If they can prove to me that I have spoken differently from what the Holy Roman Church teaches, I will at once pronounce sentence against myself and beat a retreat, but," he adds, "there lies the knot."[1] A knot tied by himself. Strange, indeed, is the method he proposes for cutting it: "If that Cardinal [Cajetan] insists on the private opinions of St. Thomas more strongly than is compatible with the doctrine and authority of the Church, I shall not yield to him until the Church withdraws from her earlier standpoint upon which I have taken up my position."

How greatly the applause with which he was meeting everywhere worked upon him psychologically, confirming him in his resistance, came out clearly at Augsburg.

It was only on this journey and at Augsburg itself that he became aware what a celebrity his action had made him. He alludes to this in the above-mentioned letter to Melanchthon, where he also reveals a flattering self-complacency: "The only thing that is new and wonderful here is, that the town rings with my name. All want to see the man who, like a new Herostratus, has kindled such a big blaze."

Cardinal Cajetan, after making vain representations to Luther, finally demanded the withdrawal of two propositions which he had plainly taught and acknowledged as his. The first was his denial that the treasure of the merits of Christ and the saints was the foundation of Indulgences; the second was the statement which appeared in the "Resolutions," that the sacraments of the Church owed their efficacy only to faith. These were points in which he had manifestly deviated from the Catholic teaching and, to boot, matters of supreme doctrinal importance; as a professor of theology Luther, moreover, had bound himself to submit to the teaching authority of the Church.

His final answer to the Papal legate was, that he could not recant unless he were convinced that he had said something against Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, the Papal definitions, or sound reason.

Then followed his famous secret flight from Augsburg to

[1] In the letter quoted to Spalatin, p. 240 f.

Wittenberg. Staupitz, who had stood by him at Augsburg, dispensed him for the journey from any part of the Rule which might have proved to his disadvantage, even from the wearing of the Augustinian habit. This Superior had again shown himself at Augsburg as a man of half-measures who allowed his prejudice for Luther to outweigh the demands of the Church and of his Order.

Luther caused his Appeal to the Pope "better instructed" to be presented to the Cardinal at Augsburg. He intended, as almost at the same time he confided to Spalatin, to make an appeal to the future Council only after the Pope, "in the plenitude of his power, or rather of his tyranny," had rejected his first appeal.[1] Meanwhile he does not know, and this makes him waver between hope and fear, whether he will be able to remain at the University of Wittenberg. Will the Elector have power to retain him in his office? Will it be possible for him to continue to lead a safe existence under his sovereign, and, above all, find protection in the present danger from imprisonment and the violent measures threatened? At this, the turning-point of his life, these were the most pressing questions.

The duty of providing for his safety and furthering his cause devolved principally on the Court Chaplain, Spalatin. Luther, in his letters to Spalatin, which duly reached the Elector either as they were written or in extracts, wisely avoids any unseasonable demands which could only have been prejudicial to his interests; on the contrary, he declares in well-chosen language, which was certain to please the Elector, that he is ready to take up the pilgrim's staff should it be necessary for the good of the cause; the verbal commentary on his letters was undertaken at Court by his able clerical friend.

"I am filled with joy and peace," he writes to the courtier in the letter above mentioned, "so that I can only wonder how my skirmish [the trial at Augsburg] appears as something great to many esteemed men." If, however, joy and contentment reigned in him at that time, this was principally owing to his natural relief at his escape from the dreaded town of Augsburg.

[1] On the day of his return to Wittenberg, October 31, 1518 (the anniversary of the day the Indulgence theses had appeared), "Briefwechsel," I, p. 273.

In feverish haste, without awaiting the result of his first appeal, he published, November 28, 1518, a new appeal to a future General Council.

An appeal to an Œcumenical Council was prohibited by old laws of the Church, because, at the commencement of any movement directed against the authority of the Church, it appeared likely to render all efforts for the composing of differences illusory. It was rightly felt that whoever came in conflict with the Church would make every effort to reserve the decision of his cause to some future Council, more especially when he is able meanwhile to devote himself freely to the furtherance of his ideas, and when the speedy summoning of a Council is very doubtful. The claim that an Œcumenical Council should be called to pronounce upon every new opinion was so extravagant that the prohibition found general approval.

At the time of Luther's advent on the scene the prospect of a General Council, owing to the dissensions among the Christian Powers, had retreated into the far distance, and even though it had been possible for the bishops throughout the whole world to assemble, the meeting, according to ancient custom and the regulations of canon law, would have taken place under the Pope's presidency. Even in this event Luther can, accordingly, have cherished but small hope of winning the day.

His deep distrust of Rome we find expressed in the letter, written almost simultaneously, to his trusted friend Wenceslaus Link, the Nuremberg Augustinian, to whom he was forwarding his account of what had taken place at Augsburg (*Acta Augustana*): "My pen is giving birth to much greater things than these *Acta*. I know not whence these thoughts come to me; the cause [i.e. the conflict], to my thinking, has not yet commenced in earnest and much less can these gentlemen from Rome look to see the end. I shall send my little works to you so that you may see if I am right in surmising that the real Anti-Christ whom Paul describes (2 Thess. ii. 3 ff.) rules at the Roman Court. I think I can prove that to-day he is worse than the Turks." [1] Whoever could speak in this way had already cut himself adrift or was on the point of so doing.

[1] On December 11, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 316.

The powerful forces within the fiery and vivacious Monk seethed like the crater of a volcano. The Lecture-hall at Wittenberg again resounded with his eloquent and vehement outbursts. The number of students at the University increased to an unexpected extent. "They surround my desk like busy ants," Luther declares in a letter.[1]

He does not know whence the ideas he pours forth come to him, but he sees daily more clearly that they are from Christ. "I see," so he wrote to Staupitz, his Superior, "they are determined [at Rome] to condemn me; but Christ on His part is resolved not to yield in me. May His holy and blessed will be done, yea, may it be done. Pray for me."[2] In the same way, though in stronger terms, he informs his friend Johann Lang soon afterwards: "Our Eck is again preparing to assail me; it will come to this, that, with the help of Christ, I shall carry out what I have long since planned, namely, to strike a deadly blow at the Roman vipers by means of a powerful book. Hitherto I have merely played and jested with Rome, albeit she has smarted as keenly under it as though it had been meant in deadly earnest."[3] "So God carries me away," we shall soon after hear him say. "God draws me. I cannot control myself." "God must see to it, what He is working through me. . . . Why has He not instructed me otherwise?" He fancies he feels "the mighty breathing of the Spirit," and little by little he is carried away by the conviction that he is God's messenger and the leader of a cause which "is not of man's invention."[4]

During the exciting years of 1517 and 1518 Luther, in addition to his polemical works, published several popular, practical handbooks on religion. They consisted chiefly of collections and enlargements of the sermons which he still continued to preach from time to time. Their publication strengthened in many the impression, that the man whom some denounced as a theological rebel was, on the contrary, simply zealous for the salvation of souls and only seeking the spiritual profit of his neighbour.

In the spring of 1517 he published, for instance, the

[1] "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 317. [2] On December 13, 1518, *ibid.*, p. 320.
[3] On February 2, 1519, *ibid.*, p. 410.
[4] The passages will be given more fully later.

German exposition of the Seven Penitential Psalms, already referred to, a book which, as he wrote to Christopher Scheurl, was intended for the rough Saxon " to whom the Christian teaching cannot be presented too fully."[1] If the work pleases no one, he says, then it will please him all the more.[2] In this work he speaks in heartfelt tones, especially when enlarging upon the " Word of Grace " and describing the riches of Christ.[3] Another book, his " Exposition of the Our Father for the simple laity," [4] first appeared in 1517 through Agricola, then again in 1518 after having been amended by the author. In the preface he says amicably : " I should like, if it were possible, to render a service even to my adversaries ; for my desire is to be profitable to all men and harmful to none." The object of such assurances is, however, too evident, and they are, moreover, flatly contradicted by his actual behaviour towards his opponents.

To pass over other pious instructions which his amazing power for work created, he also published in 1518 the detailed Latin notes of the sermons on the Ten Commandments, which he had delivered in 1516–17.[5] Many portions of this book are really useful and hardly to be distinguished from what a true spiritual guide of souls would write, but they also contain other matter which necessarily challenged dispute. In most of his explanations he gives a very clever, popular and perfectly correct presentment of the contents of the commandments and the motives for keeping them ; he goes, however, too far, for instance, in his ruthless, and occasionally even contemptuous opposition to the abuses connected with the veneration of the saints. The tone which he here adopts in his strictures could not have favourable results, and he would have done better had he devoted himself to the criticism of the superstitious practices to which he had alluded shortly before in connection with the errors of the Middle Ages.[6] Oldecop, who was not unkindly disposed, complains that " in the matter of the veneration of the saints, Luther was not in agreement with the Catholic Church."[7]

[1] On May 6, 1517, " Briefwechsel," 1, p. 97.
[2] To Johann Lang, March 1, 1517, *ibid.*, p. 88.
[3] See the passage in " Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 219 ff.
[4] Printed *ibid.*, 1, p. 74 ff. Erl. ed., 21, p. 156 ff.
[5] " Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 398 ff.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 411 ff. [7] " Chronik," p. 45.

In the book in question, where he treats of the 6th (7th) Commandment, he is very severe and exact, indeed, rather too exact and detailed in his enumeration and denunciation of the various kinds of sins of the flesh. He speaks with rhetorical emphasis and, it must be admitted, with a wealth of earnest thought, against the habit of filthy talking which was gaining ground at that time.[1] Here, for example, after the most solemn warnings against giving scandal to the little ones, he lets fall these golden words with regard to reform: "If the Church is to blossom again, the beginning must be made by a careful training of the young."[2] Among other things, Luther treats of the temptations which the devout man abhors and must abhor, although he can never escape them, and gives vent to the paradox: "True chastity is therefore to be found in sensuality, and the more filthy the sensuality, the more beautiful the chastity,"[3] surely a delightful instance of our author's propensity to unusual language. Somewhat obscurely, indeed, he also speaks against the freedom of the will to do what is good; Paul invokes the mercy of God against the temptation "in the body of this death" (Rom. vii. 24 f.), and he, Luther, would lament over the "poison of death within him." "Where then are those who vaunt their free will? Why do they not set themselves free from concupiscence as soon as they please? Why will they not, yea, why are they unable even to will? . . . Because their will is already elsewhere, dragged away as a captive."[4]

4. The Disputation of Leipzig (1519). Miltitz. Questionable Reports

The Leipzig Disputation, which commenced on June 27, 1519, and the origin and theological course of which has been often enough depicted, as was to be expected, merely induced Luther to proceed yet further with his revolutionary theology.

The Pleissenburg of Leipzig has become, since the Disputation between Luther and Carlstadt on the one side and Eck on the other, a memorable monument of German history. The great hall of this castle belonging to Duke George was hung with splendid tapestries; a guard of the citizens kept

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 490. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 494.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 486. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 485.

watch before the walls of the castle, for the Court, as well as the city, wished to insure the safety of those conducting the wordy tournament which was to be held in the public name. In addition to the professors of the University of Leipzig and the guests from Wittenberg, students as well as masters, many others were present, brought together partly by curiosity, partly by interest in one or other of the religious parties. The Duke, the guests of distinction, and the sworn stenographers had special places assigned to them. Two professorial chairs stood facing each other. On that belonging to the Wittenberg party Carlstadt, who had arranged the affair, took his seat and disputed with Eck for four whole days on man's free will and its efficacy with, and under, grace.

Then, on July 4, Luther succeeded him and at once launched into the theological controversy on the question of the Primacy of the Pope. As in the case of Carlstadt, Eck stood his ground without assistance until the Disputation closed on July 14.

The Acts of the debate were to have been submitted to the Universities of Erfurt and Paris for decision as to the winner, but this was never done. The final impression made on the minds of the audience was that Eck had borne away the palm. He had repelled the often virulent attacks of two adversaries with untiring mental and physical energy, and had displayed throughout a more extensive and ready acquaintance with the theologians, the decisions of the Church, the Fathers and the Bible than either of the representatives of the new opinions. Of a powerful and imposing exterior, with a strong sonorous voice, he dominated the course of the Disputation by his clear-headedness, his composure and deliberation, whereas Carlstadt was too hurried and confused and unable to produce the necessary positive proofs, and Luther, by his over-confidence, his rhetoric and the habitual violence of his attacks on his enemies gave umbrage to many. The greatest stumbling-block to Luther's success lay in the fact that the principal point, which was to be decisive for his standpoint towards the Church, was still, even to himself, as Protestant writers express it, "in process of inward development," whereas "Eck could take his stand on a sound and solid basis." [1]

[1] Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 245.

This principal point was the question of the recognition of the Church and her teaching office. Eck succeeded in forcing public statements from his opponent which he would perhaps have still preferred to keep in the background, but which were, as a matter of fact, the outcome of his position. On the second day of the controversy between Luther and Eck, on July 5, the question of the exercise of the Church's power and doctrinal authority in the condemnation of Hus's erroneous teaching came under discussion. Luther was now obliged to express his views on the condemnation of the "Bohemian heretics." Driven into a corner he declared, that among the Husite doctrines condemned by the Council of Constance there were some very Christian and evangelical propositions; that the Council was wrong in asserting that everyone who wished to be a member of the Church must believe in the Primacy of the Papacy; that we must learn for ourselves from Holy Scripture what is of Divine Right; that the opinion of an individual Christian must carry greater weight than that of either Pope or Council if established on better grounds; that Councils not only might err in matters of faith, but that they actually had erred, as in the case of that of Constance.

Such unheard-of admissions caused the greatest sensation. Bluff Duke George, on hearing Luther's assertion that the Christian doctrines of Hus had been unfairly condemned, exclaimed in a voice loud enough to be heard throughout the great hall: "A plague on it!" shaking his head at the same time and planting his hands on his hips.

It was an easy task for Eck to disprove on theological grounds the statements of Luther.

The Disputation had at least the effect of clearing up the position, and arousing misgivings in many of those who hitherto had been partisans of the Wittenberg Doctor.

Luther himself wrote in a very discontented frame of mind to Spalatin regarding the Disputation, saying that time had been wasted in the useless affair, and that Eck and the theologians of Leipzig only sought worldly honour and on this everything had suffered shipwreck. Only the discussion on the Primacy (i.e. that very one at which the momentous admissions were made) had been fruitful and productive. This is his own impudent way of describing his position as the only right one. "Hardly anything else," he continues,

"was treated worthily. Eck was applauded, he triumphs and reigns, but an end shall be put to this by my publication; for as the Disputation was badly conducted I shall have the Resolutions to the Disputation theses reprinted. These people of Leipzig neither greeted us nor visited us, but treated us as deadly enemies [and yet every consideration had been shown him that circumstances permitted]. Eck they supplied with an escort, they surrounded him constantly, honoured him with feasts and invitations, presented him with a coat and a costly mantle, rode out with him on pleasant excursions, in fact did everything imaginable—to disgrace us." "There you have the whole tragedy . . . it began ill and ended worse. . . . As a rule, I control my ill-humour, but here I cannot help pouring out my grudge, because after all I am human and see how the shamelessness of our adversaries and their poisonous hatred of so holy a cause have grown beyond measure." [1]

Obstinately adhering to his standpoint and embittered as he was by the Leipzig "tragedy," Luther would lend no ear to the proposals for reconciliation and settlement suggested by the Papal Chamberlain Carl von Miltitz.

His attempts in this direction had commenced even before the Disputation. Their continuance revealed on the one hand Luther's obstinacy, and on the other the inability of this lay Papal official—whose motives were merely political—to see the real seriousness of the matter. The latter, in order to secure apparent victories, went beyond his instructions and the intentions of those who had entrusted him with his mission. Luther on his part did not shrink from diplomatic concessions which could not injure him, but which anyone conversant with the conditions must have seen to be impracticable. The easy triumphs of which Miltitz's shortsighted love of peace was productive were thus of very doubtful value.[2]

[1] To Spalatin, July 20, 1519, from Wittenberg, "Briefwechsel," 2, p. 85 f. Cp. letter to the same, August 15, 1518, *ibid.*, p. 103 ff. especially p. 117.

[2] Cp. H. A. Creutzberg, "Karl von Miltitz," 1907 ("Studien und Darstellungen aus dem Gebiete der Gesch.," ed. Grauert, Bd. 6, Heft. 1). The Chamberlain, whose only recommendation was his aristocratic Saxon birth, had been entrusted with the delivery of the Golden Rose to the Elector of Saxony. That he "undertook the rôle of intermediary on his own initiative," as has recently been asserted by Protestants, is, according to Creutzberg, incorrect. The most

Luther's edition of the Latin Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, which appeared in September, 1519, assumed all the more importance in his eyes. In this work, written in the language of the learned (above, p. 306), he undertook to defend on the widest basis and before cultured men of every clime his doctrines concerning grace and salvation, faith and righteousness.

Here we have a public manifestation not merely of the doctrines which lay at the back of the schism he had stirred up by his controversy with Tetzel, but also of his wrong new view concerning Holy Scripture.

In the matter of style, Luther was more successful in his shorter works, particularly in his German controversial pamphlets. Writers who opposed him, such as Eck, Emser, Dungersheim, Alveld, Hoogstraaten, Prierias he readily withstood in words full of fire and imagination, although his arguments, as a rule, left much to be desired and were not atoned for by his passionate invective. His main contention, voiced in a more or less coarse form, is, however, always the following: the proofs which you adduce from the teaching of the Church and the Fathers do not move me because

unfortunate mistake he made was not to insist upon Luther's recantation (cp. S. Merkle, "Reformationsgeschichtliche Streitfragen," Munich, 1904, p. 51), contenting himself with Luther's illusory explanation of the end of February, 1519 ("Werke," Erl. ed., 242, p. 10 ff.), published as a pamphlet. In this Luther simply speaks of the Papal power as a thing of which the existence must be taken for granted, and emphasises in general terms the duty of charity which forbids schism without due cause! This statement has been erroneously regarded by Catholics as an admission of the Primacy by Luther, as a "wonderful confession which the evidence of the facts wrung from the heretic." With respect to this explanation, which, as Luther himself says, was destined for the "simple people," Köstlin-Kawerau's "Luther-Biographie," 1, p. 227, says: "In this way did Luther fulfil his promise [to Miltitz] of exhorting to obedience to Rome. He exhorts to submission to this power because, according to him, it merely extends to externals. With regard to anything further, its origin, its character, and its extent, he reserves to himself and to learned men generally, liberty of judgment. Of the important assertions which he had already made on this point in various passages in his works, none are here withdrawn." And yet, in this remarkable document composed at the instigation of Miltitz, he calls himself "a submissive and obedient son of the Holy Christian Churches in which, by God's help, I will die," and declares: "I may say with a clear conscience that I have never imagined anything [hostile] with regard to the Papacy or its power." He is, nevertheless, as he even there states, sure of his own "rock," and ready to stand up for it like Paul, Athanasius, and Augustine, even though he should be left quite alone. God is able to speak through one against all, even as He once spoke through the mouth of a she-ass.

Holy Scripture, upon which I take my stand, is above both Church and Fathers.

By the Holy Scripture he, moreover, persists in understanding his own interpretation of the Bible. By a tragic mistake he has come to confound his own personal and altogether subjective interpretation with the objective "Word of God" in the Bible. In the same way he makes not the slightest distinction between the meaning of the "gospel," which he fancies he has discovered, and the actual Gospel itself.

Catholics urged against Luther that the Church had been entrusted with the safeguarding of the Holy Books, with the handing down of the canon of Scripture and the correct interpretation of the same, and that, from the earliest Christian times, the Faithful had always left to the living Tradition, the General Councils and the Supreme Teacher of the Church—the Vicar of Christ and inheritor of the powers of Peter—the final decision in doctrinal questions and the correct and binding interpretation of Holy Scripture.

What Luther asserted, for instance, in his final letter to Dungersheim, brought the central dogma, namely, that of the teaching office of the Church, into still clearer light: "You have nothing else on your lips," he says to Dungersheim and to all Catholics generally, "but the words Church, Church, heretic, heretic, and you will not admit that the injunction: 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good' (1 Thess. v. 21), applies to any. But when we ask for the Church, you show us one man, the Pope, to whom you entrust everything [i.e. all decisions on matters of faith], and yet you do not prove by one word that his faith is unchangeable. Yet we have discovered in the Pope's Decretals more heresies than any heretic ever invented. You ought to prove your standpoint and instead of this you always start from the same premiss."[1] Theologians, as a matter of fact, had never claimed for all the contents of the Decretals a rank among the solemn pronouncements on faith. What is, however, more important is that Luther places the individual above the Church and the Primacy appointed by God; he puts the Scriptures in his hand, to interpret as he will. He continues as follows: "You ought to prove that the Church of God is with you and nowhere else in the world. We want the Scriptures for our judge, but you wish to be judges of the Scriptures."[2]

In this connection, seeking to justify the bitterness of his polemics, he unwittingly gives an excellent portrait of himself: "You misinterpret the words I speak, just as the ass in your midst [Alveld] is doing at the present moment. This seems to be the way with you people of Leipzig, you read without attention,

[1] "Briefwechsel," 2, p. 163. On the date see Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 258.

[2] *Ibid.*

judge presumptuously, and are too stupid to understand the writings of others. Maybe my patience will come to an end and make room for anger, for I am after all as human as you; you sit there calmly and nag at me while I am oppressed with work and everyone shows me his teeth, and, forsooth, humility is expected of me while I am being attacked by ravening wolves. The weight of the globe presses upon me (*'orbis me premit'*), and if I do so much as nod, you cannot endure it; if at last I turn round upon you, I am accused and found fault with on all sides. I write this to show my zeal for peace and concord; why, in God's name, am I not allowed to enjoy them?"

He himself shows us later in what way he was desirous of "peace and concord." From the words we have just quoted he seems, strange to say, to think that the Roman party had no right to fight for the great and sacred interests of Mother Church, nor to repel the attacks he was making upon so much which had hitherto been believed.

It is exceedingly sad to see how Luther, the once zealous religious, has become alienated more and more from the heart of the Church, from her life, ways of thought and feeling. Passion for his cause, precipitation, overstrain, both mental and bodily, the delusion that the whole world was watching the brave monk's daring move, all this cuts him off, more even than his previous conduct, from practical association with the Church. His growing lukewarmness in religion is paving the way for his complete apostasy.

He confesses that he lived in a worldly turmoil of work and distractions, of parties and feastings which led him away "to immoderation, impropriety and negligence." Recollection, penance and humility become more and more strangers to him, though he can still speak words of piety; everything is overcovered by the great struggle he has called into being; the less attention he devotes to the duties of the religious life, the more he gravitates to the Electoral Court, where Spalatin is ever busy seeking to provide him with a safe shelter. This is the talented man, so the Catholic sadly reminds himself, whose words might have assisted in calling forth a real reform within the Church, if, agreeably with the spirit and rules of the Church, he had only appealed to the Faithful and their pastors with earnestness and deliberation, with persistence and confidence in God. Instead of this, he pushed forward heedlessly in the slippery path to lay sacrilegious hands on the doctrine and the whole structure of the Church as existing up to that time.

At the close of this chapter some remarks may perhaps be permitted on certain mistaken or misunderstood tales concerning Luther, which belong to this period.

The history of the sermon referred to above (p. 334), delivered by Luther at Dresden in July, 1518, in the presence of Duke George of Saxony has recently been presented to Protestant readers in the traditional legendary form as "portraying the whole history of the following centuries." If it were really so supremely important, then we ought, indeed, in our narrative to have put this sermon in a better light and assigned it a very different position. As a matter of fact, however, its contents are by no means of any great moment and do not even justify its description as "the trial sermon of the pale Augustinian monk."

Duke George of Saxony, so we are told in this new and adorned version of the incident, "had applied to the Vicar-General of the Augustinians, Staupitz, requesting that he would procure for him an honest and learned preacher," and Staupitz thereupon sent him Luther "with a letter of recommendation in which he described him as a highly gifted young man of proved excellence, both as regards his studies and his moral character." As a matter of fact, however, it is only known that Luther happened to be in Dresden on July 25, 1518, on his way back from the Heidelberg Chapter. As he usually did, he took advantage of the opportunity afforded him of preaching. Of the letters of Duke George or of Staupitz history knows nothing.

The sermon was delivered in the castle ("*in castro*") in the presence of the Court on the aforesaid day, which was a Sunday, and also the Feast of James the Greater.[1] The text was taken from the Gospel for the Feast in which our Saviour says to James and his brother: "Ye know not what ye ask" (Matt. xx. 22). On this text Luther, doubtless in his customary burning words, described "the foolishness of people in their prayers, and what the true object of prayer should be." This is what he himself tells us.[2] He introduced among other things into the sermon a story about three virgins, which, he says, was "quite theological." According to another account, he did not lose the opportunity of expressing the ideas which dominated him, namely, that those who listen to the Word of God with an attentive mind are true disciples of Christ, chosen, and predestinated for life everlasting, and that we must overcome "the fear of God"; he no doubt laid particular stress on faith and depreciated good works. It does not seem necessary to assume that there were two different sermons. "The evangelical certainty of Salvation, as against the

[1] Luther to Spalatin, January 14, 1519, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 351
[2] *Ibid.*

traditional righteousness by works," so runs the latest legendary account, "shone forth from his words more plainly than was agreeable to the Duke."

Duke George was, and remained, a good Catholic. His opinion of Luther's sermon is characteristic: "I would have given much money not to have heard it," so he says, "because such discourses make men presumptuous." This he repeated several times at table with great displeasure. The occasion which gave rise to this remark was that Barbara von Sala, a lady of the Court who was present, praised the sermon as most reassuring, and added that if she could hear such a sermon again she would die with a quiet mind.

At the Court much was said in disparagement of the sermon and the preacher, certain conversations of Luther in the town seeming to have contributed to this. The Prior of the Augustinian monastery at Dresden wrote afterwards to Luther telling him that many found fault with him as unlearned and arrogant, etc., that the sermon in the castle was made the ground for all sorts of reproaches; that it was also said that his story of the three virgins had been directed against three particular ladies at the Court, which surely was not the case. Shortly after, when preparing for the Disputation at Leipzig, Luther must evidently have feared that the Duke was not favourably disposed, for he wrote begging that, if he had displeased him, he would "graciously pardon everything." The Duke replied that he was not aware of "any displeasure ever conceived by us against you." Duke George, who was zealous for reform, was much in favour of Luther's Indulgence theses and, after having come to an understanding with Eck, he sanctioned the Disputation at Leipzig notwithstanding the objections of the Bishop and the theological faculty.[1]

We know some details concerning Luther's behaviour in the town, and the violent attacks on Thomas of Aquin and Aristotle, to which he gave vent, in the presence of some of the Leipzig theologians, at a dinner in Emser's house. Luther, as he himself says, there defended the proposition, that "neither Thomas nor all the Thomists put together had understood a single chapter of Aristotle," undoubtedly an extraordinary statement, yet one which, stripped of its cloak of hyperbole, is quite in Luther's style. Not a single Thomist, he said on the same occasion, knew what was meant by keeping God's Commandments.[2] A young Leipzig Master in the ensuing Disputation attacked him fiercely on this score, and declared later that he had stopped his mouth so completely that he was unable to say a word. A Dominican who was standing at the door listening angrily to the attacks

[1] Luther to the Duke, May 16, 1519, "Werke," Erl. ed., 56, p. III., No. 830 ("Briefwechsel," 2, p. 52). The Duke to Luther, May 23, 1519, "Luthers Briefwechsel," 2, p. 59. Cp. "Akten und Briefe zur Kirchenpolitik Herzog Georgs von Sachsen," ed. F. Gess, Leipzig, Bd. 1, 1905, p. 85.

[2] Luther to Spalatin, January, 14, 1519, "Briefwechsel,' 1, p. 350.

upon the great Doctor of his Order, afterwards admitted that he had hardly been able to restrain himself from rushing into the room and spitting in Luther's face.

This is all that the sources contain regarding Luther's stay at Dresden. There is no justification for the proceeding of certain Protestant narrators who magnify the so-called "trial sermon," and utilise Luther's sojourn to make him utter unique predictions of the future. Other events of those years might with much greater truth be represented as momentous, particularly the Heidelberg Disputation from which Luther was then returning.

In private conversations at Dresden Luther showed clearly how far he had already separated himself from the older Church. Emser made representations to him on this score: "I told you of it plainly at Dresden," he writes in the following year, "and again at Leipzig, warning you in a friendly manner and begging you to place some restraint upon your zeal and to avoid giving offence, and not to speak of the superstitious malpractices amongst us Catholics in such a way as at the same time to root out all belief, and to rob the German people of their faith."[1] Elsewhere Emser explains: "A year before the Disputation at Leipzig [i.e. in 1518, and without doubt at Dresden] Luther declared that he cared nothing for the Pope's excommunication and had already determined to die under it. And this, should he deny it, I am ready to prove."[2] We may take it that Emser is here alluding to Luther's rude answers to his adversaries, who, according to his own story, reproached him at Dresden with the sermon he had preached at Wittenberg on the "Power of Indulgences"; some portions of this sermon had already found their way to Dresden, though as yet it had not been printed. There is no doubt that Emser himself was among these adversaries. His statement about what Luther said is absolutely trustworthy, and shows how untrue the fable was that Luther was animated by the most peaceful of intentions and only against his will was dragged into a struggle which led eventually to his excommunication.

Luther's stay at Dresden and Leipzig affords an oppor-

[1] In his pamphlet against Luther, "A venatione Luteriana Ægocerotis Assertio," end November, 1519. Enders, "Luthers Briefwechsel," 1, p. 225, n 8. Cf. "An den Stier zu Wittenberg." No place or year (1520, or beginning 1521). Fol. Aij, 6.

[2] "Auff des Stiers tzu Wittenberg Wiettende Replica," Leipzig, 1521, Aiiij., Enders, *ibid.*

tunity for discussing two of his famous and oft-quoted utterances, which, in the sense they are generally employed against him, are historically doubtful. Emser, it is usually stated, with his own ears heard Luther declare that he was only waiting for an assurance of protection from the secular power in order to declare war on the Pope, and that Luther himself had admitted that his cause had not been begun for God's sake.

The first utterance, so well revealing his low and cowardly standard, Luther is said to have given vent to at Dresden in 1518, telling Emser that if only a Prince would shield him, he would do his worst against the Church. But is Emser here really referring to words spoken by Luther himself? What he actually says is this: "Many people know that one of his Order had often and in divers places been heard to say that if he [Luther] only knew of a Prince who would have backed him, he would give Pope, Bishop and Parsons a fine time of it."[1] In these words we have accordingly not an utterance of Luther's own, but merely one of a brother monk. Neither is Dresden given as the place where this was said; on the contrary, the Augustinian referred to was heard to say these words in many different places. What he repeatedly said certainly does not redound to Luther's credit, neither does it agree with the high-spirited defence of the truth which is generally attributed to him by Protestants. Whether the Augustinian spoke from a thorough knowledge of Luther, and whether what he said really renders words which Luther had spoken, cannot be determined. At any rate, the manner in which Luther acted in order to gain and retain the protection of the Elector, through the intermediary of Spalatin, gives some weight to the words.

The other statement said to have been made by Luther was as follows: "Let the devil do his utmost, the business was not begun for God's sake and, for His sake, shall not be ended." This Emser says he actually heard from Luther himself;[2] he tells Luther: "I warned you three times in a fraternal spirit and begged you for God's sake to spare the poor people to whom you were certainly giving great scandal by this matter, and you at last answered me: 'Let the devil, etc.'"

It is, however, very doubtful whether Luther would have said so plainly that his cause in the controversy had not been begun, and should not cease, for God's sake (which is what Emser takes him as meaning). In his reply to Emser Luther declares he had meant something quite different by what he said and we have no right to set aside his explanation. He relates that the words were said to Emser in the Chancery of the castle at Leipzig on the occasion of the Disputation of 1519, but really of the opposite party who wished to do him "harm" by the proposed Disputation; Eck, who had

[1] *Ibid.*, fol. A, 3'. [2] "An den Stier zu Wittenberg," fol. A, 2.

"begun the Disputation," Emser and the Leipzig theologians had a mind to injure thereby his teaching; "my words applied to them," "not to myself," those of "ours who were standing by" are my witnesses;[1] besides, he writes, he would have been "possessed" had he said: "I did not begin this in God's name"; but, because in saying this he regretted "that the opposite party sought honour rather than the truth," he said it "with sorrowful words and a sad mind." Emser nevertheless stood to his version[2] and declared that Luther, far from speaking sadly, had said the words with eyes sparkling with anger; besides, Luther had had no right to say anything of the kind about Emser and the Leipzig theologians, as they had not then set on foot any measures against him.

It is quite likely that Emser gave Luther the threefold warning he speaks of above. But that Luther should have replied to the exhortation "to spare the poor people," etc., by the strange statement that "the matter had not been begun for God's sake" is so utterly unlikely that he was probably right in denying it in his reply to Emser.[3] We may safely assume that Emser was a little confused in his recollection of the interview; in his conversation in the castle at Leipzig he may have spoken of Luther's action generally and of the Disputation in particular, whereupon Luther, thinking only of the Disputation, may well have said: "Let the devil," etc.; which Emser, in the excitement of the dispute, took to refer to Luther's action as a whole.

At any rate, Luther's fear of giving scandal, according to his own letters, was not nearly so great as he makes out in his reply to Emser. Here, in the very passage under discussion, he overwhelms Emser with abuse, a fact which does not awaken confidence in his statements: "That man would indeed be a monster, even worse than Emser himself, who did not heartily grieve to cause annoyance to the poor people." He calls his opponent a "poisonous, shameless liar," a "murderer," who spoke contrary to his own "heart and conscience." "My great and joyful courage cuts you to the quick"; "Ecks, Emsers, Goats, Wolves and Serpents and such-like senseless and ferocious beasts" would have raved even against Christ Himself. In the same breath he declares, that in his behaviour up to that time "he had never once started a quarrel"; everything unfavourable that had been said of him was based merely on lies, which had been invented about him "these three years" and had become a crying scandal.

[1] "Auff des Bocks zu Leypczick Antwort," 1521, "Werke," Erl. ed., 27, 206 ff.

[2] "Auff des Stiers tzu Wittenberg Wiettende Replica," fol. A, 3′.

[3] "Auff des Bocks," etc., "Werke," Erl. ed., n. 27, p. 208 f.

CHAPTER X

LUTHER'S PROGRESS IN THE NEW TEACHING

1. The Second Stage of his development. Assurance of Salvation

Two elements were still wanting to Luther's teaching—the very two which, at a later date and till the end of his life, he regarded as the corner-stone of the truth which he had discovered—viz. Faith alone as the means of justification, and the assurance of Divine favour, which was its outcome. Both these elements are most closely connected, and go to make up the Lutheran doctrine of the appropriation of salvation, or personal certainty of faith. In accordance therewith justifying faith includes not only a belief in Christ as the Saviour; I must not merely believe that He will save and sanctify me if I turn to Him with humility and confidence—this the Church had ever taught—but I must also have entire faith in my justification, and rest assured, that without any work whatsoever on my part and solely by means of such a faith, all the demands made upon me are fulfilled, the merits of Christ appropriated, and my remaining sins not imputed to me; such is personal assurance of salvation by faith alone.

The teaching of the Catholic Church, we may remind our readers, never recognised in its exhortation to faith and confidence in God, the existence of this "faith alone" which justifies without further ado, nor did it require that of necessity there must be a special faith in one's state of salvation. In place of faith alone the Church taught what the Council of Trent thus sums up: "We are said to be justified by faith because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and reach the blessed company of His children." [1]

And instead of setting up a special faith in our own state

[1] Sess. 6, c 8.

of salvation, her teaching, as expressed by the same Council, had ever been that "no devout person may doubt the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the power and efficacy of the sacraments," though, on the other hand, "no one may boast with certainty of the remission of his sins"; "nor may it be said that those who are truly justified must convince themselves beyond all doubt that they are justified and that no one is absolved from sin and justified unless he believe with certainty that he has been so absolved and justified, as though absolution and justification were accomplished by this faith alone"; "but rather everyone, bearing in mind his own weakness and indisposition, may well be anxious and afraid for his salvation, as no one can know, with the certainty of faith which excludes all error, that he has attained to the grace of God." [1]

Such was the doctrine which Luther had learnt in his early days as a monk; it animated his youthful zeal for the religious life and did not interfere with his contented and happy frame of mind, as expressed in the letter of invitation to his first Mass and his conversations with Usingen.[2] The writings of St. Bernard had taught him, that in the religious life this happiness is the portion of all those who seek God. Luther knew that thousands like himself rejoiced from their hearts in the "anointed cross" of the service of God, as Bernard calls it. On the by-path he chose to follow he lost, however, his happiness and increased his doubts and inward unrest.

Luther, after forsaking the Catholic standpoint, had hitherto been tormented by anxiety as to how we can be assured of the Grace of God. Having left the secure footing of the Church's views on nature, grace and predestination, he was now in search of a certainty even more absolute. His Commentary on Romans had concluded with the anxious question: "Who will give me the assurance that I am pleasing God by my works?" As yet he can give no other answer than that, "we must call upon God's grace with fear and trembling and seek to render Him gracious to us by humility and self-annihilation, because all depends upon His arbitrary Will (above, p. 217 ff.). In these lectures.

[1] *Ibid.*, cap. ix., *Contra inanem fiduciam.*

[2] See the letter above, p. 15. On Usingen, see his Life, by N. Paulus, p. 17.

in the course of his gloomy and abstruse treatment of predestination, he had instructed his hearers how they must be resigned to this uncertainty concerning eternity (p. 236 ff.).

In the act of resignation he perceived various signs of predestination. He says in the Commentary on Romans: "There are three degrees in the signs of predestination. Some are content with God's Will, but are confident they are among the elect and do not wish to be damned. Others, who stand on a higher level, are resigned and contented with God's Will, or at least wish to be so, even though God should not choose to save them but to place them amongst the lost. The third, i.e. the last and highest degree, is to be resigned in very deed to hell if such be the Will of God, which is perhaps the case with many at the hour of death. In this way we become altogether purified from self-will and the wisdom of the flesh."[1]

"Terrible pride prevails among the hypocrites and men of the law, who, because they believe in Christ, think themselves already saved and sufficiently righteous," these claim to attain to grace and the Divine Sonship "by faith alone" ("*ex fide tantum*"), "as though we were saved by Christ without the performance of any works or acts of our own" ("*sic ut ipsi nihil operentur, nihil exhibeant de fide*"). Such men possess too much faith, or rather none at all.[2]

While he was thus wavering between reminiscences of the Catholic teaching and his own pseudo-mystical ideas on justification and imputation, his mind must indeed have been in a state of incessant agitation, so that uneasiness and fear became his natural element. "As we are unable to keep God's commandments and are therefore always unrighteous, there remains nothing for us but to be in constant fear of the Judgment ('*ut iudicium semper timeamus*'), and to pray for pardon, or rather for the non-imputing of our unrighteousness." "We are to rejoice, according to the Psalmist (ii. 11), before God on account of His Mercy, but with trembling on account of the sin which deserves His Judgment."[3]

In 1525 he wrote: To leave man no free will for what is good and to make him altogether dependent on God's predestination "seems, it is true, cruel and intolerable; countless of the greatest minds of previous ages have taken offence at this. And who, indeed, is there whom the idea does not offend? I myself have more than once been greatly scandalised at it and plunged into an abyss of despair so that I wished I had never been created. But then I learned how wholesome despair is and how close it lies to grace."[4]

This he "learned," or thought he learned, through his doctrine of assurance of salvation through faith.

[1] "Schol. Rom.," p. 215. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 132.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[4] In *De servo arbitrio*, "Werke," Weim ed., 18, p. 719.

"The forgiveness offered us by God in His Word" (if we may here anticipate his later teaching), became for him a definite object of sanctifying and saving faith, to the extent that faith came to be identical in his eyes with *fiducia*.

Faith is, as he says, "a real heartfelt confidence in Christ."[1] "He strongly emphasises at the same time the relation between what is here proposed for belief and the individual believer; I believe that God is gracious to me and forgives me. That, says Luther [later], makes the Article of the Forgiveness of Sins particularly difficult, for though the other Articles of Faith may be more difficult if once we begin to speak of them and try to understand them, yet in the Article of the Forgiveness of Sins what presents the greatest difficulty is, that 'each one must accept this for himself in particular.' This was hard to a man because he must stand greatly in awe of the anger of God and His Judgment; but when the Article of the Forgiveness of Sins comes home to us and we really experience its meaning, then the other Articles concerning God, the Creator, the Son of God, etc., 'also come home to us and enter into our experience.' And, according to Luther, true faith consists in this, that I believe and am assured that God is my God because He speaks to me and forgives my sins."[2] While taking the acceptance of the whole of revelation for granted, he magnifies fiducial faith to such an extent, that many Protestant theologians have come to consider a trusting faith in Christ to be his only essential requirement, in fact to imagine that in this alone faith consists; claiming to be merely following Luther, they deny that the acceptance of individual points of faith, i.e. Articles of Faith, can be a necessary condition for salvation.

Fiducial faith, with its assurance of salvation was the way which Luther discovered out of all his troubles about two years after the termination of his Commentary on Romans, in 1518, or the beginning of 1519. This discovery is a remarkable event, which stands alone, and with which we must concern ourselves after first examining what led up to it. From the place where it was made, viz. the tower belonging to the monastery, it might be styled the Tower Experience.

The incident remained imbedded in Luther's mind till his old age; he frequently alludes to it, and though in some of its details his memory did not serve him aright and his apprehension of it may have been somewhat modified by party prejudice, yet the main elements of the story appear to be historically quite credible. He fixes not merely the

[1] Köstlin, "Luthers Theologie," 2^2, p. 180. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

place, but also the time of the incident, namely, the commencement of his second course of lectures on the Psalms (1518–19), i.e. two matters which ever serve as the most reliable framework for the picture of an event long past. From what he relates between 1532 and 1545, one thing is directly certain regarding this purely spiritual, and for that reason rather less tangible incident, viz. that it was an experience arrived at only after the acutest mental anguish and which Luther ever after regarded as a special illumination vouchsafed to him by God. It is connected with Romans i. 17: "For the justice of God is revealed therein [in the Gospel] from faith unto faith as it is written [Hab. ii. 4]: 'The just man liveth by faith.'"

What is indirectly no less certain, from the unanimity of the testimonies, and from the course of his development as vouched for by his writings, is that the discovery in question was really that of the assurance of salvation.

The various opinions which have been expressed on the account of the event given by Luther (see below, p. 388 ff.) in 1545, and the numerous attempts which have been made to fix a date for the same, render it necessary to trace chronologically the development of the doctrine of faith and salvation in Luther's mind till the year 1519. We shall see that his statement as to the time when the event took place (1518–19) not only presents no difficulty, but that such a termination to his experiences was naturally to be expected.

Prior to 1518–19 the absolute assurance of salvation which appears afterwards is nowhere distinctly expressed in Luther's doctrine on faith and salvation.

Passages to the contrary, which have been quoted from the unprinted lectures on Hebrews delivered previous to the autumn of 1517, need not be interpreted in the sense of fiducial faith and assurance of salvation. They refer rather indistinctly to the effects of faith without the works which Luther had now come to detest, and attack "self-righteousness," as in the Commentary on Romans ("*sola fides . . . quæ non nititur operibus illis* [*orationibus et præparatoriis*"]). They only hint vaguely at the road he will follow later.[1]

Again, in the Indulgence theses of October 31, 1517, directed against Tetzel, the assurance of salvation is not expressed, and we find a recommendation "to trust rather to enter heaven by

[1] F. Loofs, "Leitfaden der Dogmengesch.," 4, p. 711, lays stress on passages quoted by Denifle, but admits (p. 721) that they are "not so clear." The same applies to the passages quoted above, p. 261.

much tribulation than by security and peace." In place of *pax, pax !* he, as a mystic, would prefer to exhort the people with the cry : *crux, crux !* (thesis 93).

Neither do the theses of the Heidelberg Disputation in April, 1518, contain the assurance of salvation, although theses 25–8 touch upon justification and, as against the law, extol the great effects of the faith which Christ works in us.[1]

On the other hand, the Resolutions to the Indulgence theses which appeared shortly after (1518) treat to a certain extent of the subject and attempt to give a solution.[2] There we read : " In the confusion [in the mind of the man who is perturbed by thoughts of sin and rejection] God works a strange work in order to accomplish His work " ; grace is infused (" *infunditur gratia*"), while man still fancies he " is about to be damned." In order to rid himself of his " despair," he goes to Confession " so that the priest may declare him absolved and give peace to his conscience." " The man who is to be absolved must take great care lest he doubt the remission of his sins." Faith in Christ's words to Peter : " Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth," etc., does all. The whole passage, which describes justification in the fanciful and paradoxical language of the mystic, is worth quoting : " When God begins to justify a man, He first damns him ; He is about to build, but first He pulls down, to heal but first He deals wounds, to vivify but first He condemns to death. He crushes a man, humbles him by the knowledge of himself and his sins and makes him tremble, so that, under a sense of his misery, he cries out [with Holy Scripture] ' there is no peace for my bones because of my sins, there is no health in my flesh because of Thy wrath. For the mountains melt away before the face of God, He sends out His arrows, He troubles us with His anger and with the breath of His wrath. The sinner sinks down into hell and shame covers his face. David frequently experienced this confusion and tribulation and describes it with sighs in several of the Psalms. Salvation has its origin in this confusion, because ' the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.' " The ways of God are in a tempest and a whirlwind, according to Nahum (i. 3) ; man's destruction is to Him " the most pleasing sacrifice," the animal sacrificed is torn in pieces, the hide is stripped off, and it is slaughtered. Luther in three passages from the Prophets, describes the " infusion of grace," which man is apt to mistake for the outpouring of the Divine wrath upon him.

Because the man who is justified is still " without peace and consolation," not trusting his own judgment, he begs the priest for comfort in Confession. " He is led to cling to the judgment of another not because he is a spiritual superior, or because he possesses any power, but on account of the words of Christ Who cannot lie : ' Whatsoever thou shalt loose,' etc. Faith in these

[1] Cp. K. Stange, " Die ersten ethischen Disputationen Luthers " (" Quellenschriften zur Gesch. des Protestantismus," No. 1), p. 54.

[2] " Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 540 f. ; " Opp. Lat. var.," 2, p. 152 *seq.*

words has worked peace of conscience while the priest looses by virtue of the same."[1] "Christ is our peace. Without faith in His word, no one will ever be at peace even after more than a thousand absolutions from the Pope. Thanks be to God for this sweet power of the priest."

Such words of gratitude do not disguise the fact, that the sacrament of penance is stripped of its meaning by the assurance, that "the remission of guilt takes place by the infusion of grace before the priest has given absolution."

Above all it is plain we have not yet here that assurance of salvation, as Luther held it at a later date:

"Whoever seeks peace in another way [than through the absolution of the priest]," he says in the same passage, "say, by his own inward experience, appears to be tempting God, and not seeking peace by faith." With this denial of the validity of personal inward experience ("*experientia intus*") he brushes aside an element which, scarcely a year later, he represents as essential. He says still more definitely: "The remission of guilt is not assured to us, as a general rule, except by the sentence of the priest, and not even by him unless we believe Christ's promise with regard to loosing. But so long as we are not certain of the remission it is no remission." "As the infusion of grace is hidden under the appearance of anger, man is still more uncertain of grace when it is present than when it is absent."[2]

That Luther could rest satisfied with so shadowy and insufficient a conception can only be attributed to his state of mind at the time.

He lays great stress on absolution in the Disputation of the year 1518 "For the calming of troubled consciences" (above, p. 319).[3] Here it is expressly stated, that the strongest assurance regarding the state of grace is to be derived from the priest's absolution and the accompanying faith of the penitent Christian: "Whoever is absolved by the power of the keys must rather die and renounce all creatures than doubt of his absolution" (thesis 16). "Those who declare the remission of sins to be doubtful on account of the uncertainty of contrition, err to the point of denying the faith" (13), for "the forgiveness of sins is based much more upon faith in the word of Christ: 'Whatsoever thou shalt loose,' etc." (9). "The power of the keys operates a sure and infallible work by the word and the command of Christ, when used in earnest." (24). The concluding words of the Disputation already quoted elsewhere accordingly exhort to boundless confidence, while at the same time alluding significantly to the text

[1] Cp. Weim. ed., 1, p. 542. "Opp. Lat. var.," p. 156: "*Cui (sacerdoti absolventi) qui crediderit cum fiducia, vere obtinuit pacem et remissionem apud Deum; id est certus fit, se esse absolutum, non rei sed fidei certitudine propter infallibilem misericordiam promittentis sermonem Quodcunque solveris*," etc. "*Sic Ro. V. Iustificati gratis per gratiam ipsius, pacem habemus ad Deum per fidem, non utique per rem.*"

[2] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 541.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 629 ff.; "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 378 *seq.*

which has risen on Luther's horizon, though as yet he understands it only imperfectly: "The just man liveth by faith."

His state of uncertainty with regard to the appropriation of salvation caused Luther great disquietude. Other circumstances, particularly his feverish excitement at the outset of his public struggle, also contributed towards his inward unrest. The morbid fear of which he had never rid himself was also powerfully stirred.

The supreme degree of this painful torment of soul may be gathered from the description he gives in the Resolutions.

In this work, which appeared in August, 1518, in dealing with the 15th Indulgence thesis, he tries to prove that the punishment of Purgatory may be made up merely by fear and terror. Many of those living even now, he says, had experienced how high the flood of such interior sufferings can rise and how close they bring a man to despair. He would not quarrel with any who did not believe this, but those who had been through such trials were in a position to speak of them. Tauler treated of such pains in his German sermons and brought forward some examples; of course, to the Scholastics Tauler was unknown; they did not appreciate him, but he had found more real theology in this theologian who wrote in German than "among the whole of the Scholastics of all the universities." He then proceeds, beginning with the very formula with which Paul introduces the account of his raptures: "I know a man" (*Novi hominem*), to describe the mystical interior sufferings which he had "frequently" experienced; though they had never persisted long, they were so "hellish," that whoever had not undergone them himself was quite unable to speak of them. Had this consuming fire lasted only for the tenth part of an hour all a man's bones were reduced to ashes.

"God then appears to be horribly angered and with Him all creation. There is no possibility of flight, no comfort whether within or without, only a hollow accusing voice. The soul laments, according to the words of Scripture: 'Lord I am cast away from Thy face,' she dares not even say: 'Chastise me not in Thy wrath.' At this moment—inexplicable as it is—the soul is unable even to believe in its possible liberation, but only feels that the punishment is not at an end. It appears everlasting and unceasing. The soul finds nothing in its whole being but a bare longing for

help, nothing but terrible sighing, though it knows not whence to implore assistance. Thus the soul, like Christ, is completely extenuated, all its bones are numbered, there is not a tissue in it which is not penetrated with the excruciating bitterness, with flight, with mournful anxiety and pain, and all for ever and ever. When a ball passes over a board every point of the line along which it travels bears the whole weight of the ball, though it does not receive the ball into itself. So, too, the eternal flood of pain passes over the soul and causes it to taste the whole endless weight of eternal pain in every part, but the pain is not permanently received into the soul, it does not last, but passes."[1]

The above so strange and fantastic description incorporated in a Latin work written for the learned, in the interests of Luther's psychology, calls for further consideration.

Particular stress must here be laid on the false mysticism in which Luther was then entangled, and his free use of the fanciful language of certain of the mystics. Luther's states had, however, nothing in common with those described in somewhat similar words by the healthier mystics, viz. the sore trial of the Mount of Olives through which the soul passes owing to the complete withdrawal of consolation. He, however, imagines he sees himself portrayed not only in such descriptions of the mystics, but also in mystical passages in the Psalms over which, at this time of change, he was fond of brooding. David's cries ring in his ears ; his experience of the hell in which the soul must dwell, of the life which draws nigh to hell, of the bones which are banished to the gate of hell, of the sinking into a dark sea, into the bowels of the earth under the heaped-up weight of endless misery.

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 1, p. 557 ; "Opp. Lat. var.," 2, p. 179 *seq.* No reason can be advanced against the application of this passage to Luther himself except that the formula he employs, *Novi hominem* (cp. 2 Cor xii. 2: "*Scio hominem in Christo . . . raptum*"), he also once makes use of in an account given of another person. This circumstance, however, does not invalidate the reference to his own person, which is apparent from the whole context. It is true, however, that Luther does not directly refer to himself. The Protestant historians, J. Köstlin, W. Köhler, W. Braun, G. Kawerau, etc., also refer the passage to Luther himself. The last-named historian says, in the "Deutsch-Evangelische Blätter," 1906, p. 447, that this passage of the Resolutions gives an idea "of the night of the soul which he had experienced."

It must also be borne in mind that the Monk, with his pseudo-mystical ideas, cherished a gloomy conception of God, and held the terrible doctrine of the absolute predestination of the damned. Having wandered away from the Catholic teaching, with his views on man's lack of free will, and the theory of arbitrary imputation by God, he found no answer in his troubled conscience to the question which weighed him down, namely, how to arrive at the assurance of a Gracious God. Confusion and interior pangs of conscience for a while gained the upper hand.

Lastly, his peculiar morbid tendency to fear must also be taken into account, for it afforded an opportunity to the Tempter to add to his confusion by raising difficulties regarding the deficiencies of his new, self-chosen theology.

Adolph Hausrath in his Life of Luther even speaks of periodical mental disturbances from which he suffered during the time he was a monk; the disturbing power inherent in the monastic practices, so he says, took possession of his sensitive nature with its strong feelings; Luther only escaped the danger of going mad by bravely bursting the fetters of the monastic Rule and the Popish Faith. In the strong inward combats which Luther endured at a later date Hausrath recognises a return of this affliction. In his second edition he has toned down this view of Luther's periodical attacks of mental illness out of regard for the objections which had, not without reason, been urged against his statement. In Luther's case, however, there is no reason for assuming any "monkish mental disease," nor can he be proved to have suffered from any disturbance whatever of his mental functions at any time of his life.[1] But if we take it that the night of the soul which he passed through, whether in the monastery or during his later struggle, had at its basis a peculiar physico-psychic disposition revealing a want of normal inward stability, then we can perhaps easily explain some other strange and at first blush inexplicable phenomena which his case presents.

At any rate, the fundamental new dogma of the assurance of salvation was not the product of a clear, quiet, calm atmosphere of soul. It was born amidst unbearable inward mental confusion, and was a frantic attempt at self-pacifica-

[1] See volume vi., chapter xxxvi., "Dark side of the Life of the Soul," 4, 5.

tion on the part of the Wittenberg Doctor whose active but unstable mind had already left the true course.

It is of interest and helps us to reach a right understanding of the Tower Experience, to follow the change of view regarding assurance of salvation which is apparent in Luther's statements and writings in the latter months of 1518 and beginning of 1519.

At the time when, in October, 1518, Luther, a prey to other anxieties, stood before Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg, he was already making great strides towards the new and consoling dogma of faith alone, moved thereto by indignation at the censure which one of his propositions had called forth. He says to Cardinal Cajetan in his explanation of the second of the assertions which he was required to withdraw, that it was incorrect to speak of it as "a new and false theology that no one can be justified except by faith, and that it is necessary to hold it as certain in faith that one is justified, and not in any way to doubt the obtaining of grace, because whoever doubts or is uncertain is no longer justified, but is rejecting grace." [1]

He attempts to prove this first as regards Confession. The principal thing is to believe the words of Christ: "Whatsoever thou shalt loose," etc., i.e. by applying the words to oneself; "under pain of eternal damnation and to avoid committing a sin of unbelief," it is necessary to believe this; this faith is the only disposition for the sacrament and no work whatever serves as a preparation.[2] No one could receive grace who doubted of its reception; but, if we believed, then we received everything in the sacrament. The belief that we receive a personal remission of sin is, according to St. Bernard, the testimony of the Holy Ghost in our heart; this, according to the same Father, is expressed in Romans iii. 28: "We hold that a man is justified by Faith without the works of the law." Let Cardinal Cajetan, he says finally —after quoting a great number of biblical passages having no bearing on the matter in hand—show him how he is to understand in any other way all these texts from the Divine utterances.

What is remarkable is, however, that, during his trial at Augsburg, he allows Confession and Absolution to recede further

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 13 f. "Opp. Lat. var.," 2, p. 377 *seq.*

[2] "*Per nulla opera aptus (eris) ad sacramentum, sed per solam fidem, quia sola fides verbi Christi iustificat, vivificat, dignificat, præparat; sine qua omnia alia vel sunt præsumptionis vel desperationis studia. Iustus enim non ex dispositione sua sed ex fide vivit,* Rom. i. 17," which passage (see below, p. 391 ff.) accordingly already plays a great part in his considerations.

into the background than in the Resolutions ; he no longer speaks of the above-mentioned magical production of the personal assurance of salvation, by the formula of absolution, as by the testimony of another ; he now holds the absolute certainty of justification to be present by faith even before this, whenever a man is willing to submit himself, according to his instructions, to the Sacrament of Penance.[1] Thus faith alone and the assurance of salvation were already present. The principal difficulty, however, as he admits below (p. 389 f.), still troubled his mind. This was the Justice of God, which haunted his conscience, though it did not hinder his going forward.

The appeal he made to a General Council in November and his "conjecture" of December, 1518, that the Pope might be Antichrist,[2] were momentous indications that he was cutting himself adrift from the authority of the Church. At the same time he stripped the ideas he had hitherto held on faith of everything that reminded him of the traditional teaching of the Church ; he transformed the faith necessary for justification into a mere act of confidence in the merits of Christ without any reference to the Sacraments, to the other truths of faith, or to the Church, who is the guardian and mouthpiece of faith. To lay hold upon the righteousness of Christ with a sure trust is made to suffice for justification and for the fullest assurance of salvation, without any of the preliminaries and conditions on which he had formerly insisted. This act, too, God alone operates in man, who himself is devoid of all free will. Although he incidentally clothes the act of confidence with love, and even hints at the good works a man may have performed previous to this act, also requiring good resolutions for the future, yet these are only additions which are really inconsistent with his idea. Henceforward fiducial faith appears to him as really an isolated fact, an act of confidence inspired by God merely from His good pleasure and with no regard for any work.

[1] In the beginning of 1519 he gives instructions to the Faithful, intended to show them how to make a good use of Confession ("A Short Instruction how to make a Confession," "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 57 ff ; Erl. ed., 21, p. 244 ff.). Even in March, 1520, he republished this little work in an extended form, "Confitendi Ratio," Weim. ed., 6, p. 154 *seq.* "Opp. Lat. var.," 4, p. 152 *seq.* (cp. Köstlin-Kawerau, 1, p. 278), where he recommends confession, merely warning the penitent, "*ut non fiducia confessionis vel faciendæ vel factæ nitatur, sed in solius Dei clementissimam promissionem tota fidei plenitudine confidat, certissimus videlicet, quod, qui confessuro peccata sua promisit veniam, promissionem suam fidelissime præstabit.*"

[2] To Wenceslaus Link, December 11, 1518, "Briefwechsel," 1, p. 316.

A vast change of far-reaching consequence had taken place in Luther's conception of the appropriation of the *iustitia Dei*, he had now reached an interpretation of the words *iustus ex fide vivit* and of the whole meaning of the gospel, upon which, notwithstanding the independence of his treatment of doctrine, he had never hitherto ventured.

We may well ask what event, what development, had led up to this.

Salvation by faith alone and the absolute assurance of one's state of grace, were taught by Luther quite openly in the second course of lectures on the Psalms, which he had commenced in 1518 (perhaps at the end of the year), and the beginning of which he published in 1519 with a preface addressed to the Elector Frederick, dated March 27, 1519 (see above, p. 285). This was the "*Operationes in Psalmos*," upon the publication of which he was engaged until 1521, and which was finally left unfinished.

This work he, even at a later date, described as an entirely true exposition of his actual teaching on justification.[1]

Other lectures, delivered at an earlier period, received no such praise from him; on the contrary, he never took the trouble of having them printed, and does not even mention them. Although the Commentary on Romans, which we have already studied, had advanced a considerable distance along the new lines of thought, nevertheless, at a later date its tone appeared too Catholic to please him; it did not contain the new creed "*Credo me esse salvum*." The same is true of the earlier course on the Psalms, of the lectures on Galatians, on Hebrews and on the Epistle to Titus. Luther, as a rule, was very ready to have his writings printed, but these, after he had entered upon the second stage of his development, he plainly looked upon as unripe and incomplete.

Simultaneously with the printing of the new Commentary on the Psalms he commenced that of another Commentary, also consisting of lectures. This is the shorter of the two works on Galatians which he has left us in print (above, p. 306 f.). This Commentary on Galatians, together with the "*Operationes in Psalmos*," is the earliest witness to his new and definitive conception of *sola fides* as an entire confidence in one's justification.

[1] Mathesius, "Aufzeichnungen," p. 75.

To these must be added the almost contemporary "*Sermo de triplici iustitia*" delivered towards the end of 1518, and the "*Sermo de duplici iustitia*," dating from the commencement of 1519.

The righteousness of Christ, he says in the sermon on the threefold righteousness[1]—without any reference to the Sacraments, with the exception of Baptism, or to the Church's means of grace—"is our whole being" and "becomes by faith our righteousness, according to Romans i.: 'The just man liveth by faith'"; "Whoever has this shall not be damned, even though he commit sin,"[2] this being proved by two passages from the Psalms; "by this man becomes lord of all things." There is no such thing as merit. "Every Christian must beware of ever doubting as to whether his works are pleasing to God; whoever doubts this, sins, loses all his works and labours in vain. . . . He is not acting from faith or in faith." "As you believe in Christ so too you must believe that your works are well pleasing to God because they are of faith [i.e. done in a state of grace]."

In the sermon on the twofold righteousness one of the first quotations from the Bible on which the same idea is based and yet more strongly expressed is again Romans i. 17: "The justice of God is revealed in the gospel," etc.[3] This passage assumes a more prominent position in his mind. He pauses in his explanation of Psalm xxx. 1: "*In iustitia tua libera me*"; this, he says, signifies "the righteousness of Christ which has become ours by faith, grace and the mercy of God." He finds that this righteousness is frequently referred to in the Psalms as the "work of God, confession, power of God, mercy, truth and justice. These are all names for faith in Christ, or rather names for that righteousness which is in Christ." It is true that "this alien righteousness which is only infused by grace is never completely infused all at once, but begins, increases and is finally completed by death." It is displayed by works of faith, especially those for the good of others, where man, "the lord of all things," makes himself "the servant of all"—words which Luther employs in exactly the same sense shortly afterwards as the foundation of his work: "On the freedom of a Christian man." Faith, i.e. confidence in our own salvation by Christ, works all this; it imparts a certainty so that we are able to say: "Christ's life, work, sufferings and death are mine, just as though I had myself lived, worked, suffered and died; so great is the confidence with which you are able to glory in Christ."[4]

His teaching, even then, was against the law. According to him, says Loofs, "the law, even as 'explained' in the New Testament, which renders assurance of salvation possible only after the fulfilment of demands impossible to the natural man,

[1] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 44 f. "Opp. Lat. var.," 2, p. 325 *seq.*
[2] "*Hanc qui habet, etiamsi peccet, non damnatur.*"
[3] "Werke," Weim. ed., 2, p. 146. "Opp. Lat. var.," 2, p. 330.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 145 [329].

is, it is true, necessary as a negative preparation for faith, though not to be regarded as the expression of the relationship desired by God between Himself and man. It is the gospel which teaches us the position which God wishes us to occupy with regard to Himself; according to its teaching we must, before we do anything for our salvation, be certain by faith of God's forgiving grace, in order to be born again by such a faith and become capable of fulfilling the Will of God."[1] The Protestant theologian who writes thus in his History of Dogma also points out that according to Luther, the law was merely revealed by God as an educational measure and as the foundation of a scale of rewards, whereas the gospel represents the justice of God in the order of grace (Rom. i. 17). "In this conception of the antagonism between the law and the gospel," says Loofs, "and in the possibility and necessity of an assurance of salvation which it presupposes lies the fundamental difference between the Lutheran and the Catholic view of Christianity."[2]

At these fundamental views regarding the appropriation of salvation, or righteousness by faith, Luther had accordingly already arrived in 1518–19 when engaged on his second exposition of the Psalms.

2. The Discovery in the Monastery Tower (1518–19)

Luther describes, in an important passage of the Preface to the Latin edition of his works in 1545, how he finally arrived at his ideas of faith and the assurance of salvation.[3] It is the only occasion on which he expatiates in so detailed and vivid a manner on his own development. In the light of this passage his other assertions must be considered.

The reader is at once struck by what Luther relates of the gloom and confusion of his mind previous to the discovery in the tower. In the preface, he says: "The passage, Romans i., 'The Justice of God is revealed in the Gospel,' had, till then, been an obstacle to me. For I hated the words

[1] F. Loofs, "Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengesch."[4], p. 721 f.

[2] P. 722. We may mention casually Loofs's well-founded criticism of Luther's doctrine of Justification and Assurance of Salvation (p. 767 f.). Further attention will be given to this point of his teaching and to that on the Law and the Gospel in volume iv., xxviii., 3, and volume vi., xxxix., 2 and 4.

[3] "Opp. Lat. var.," 1, p. 22 *seq.* This passage will be compared with a similar lengthy statement in the Commentary on Genesis ("Opp. Lat. exeg.," 7, p. 74, cp. 10, p. 155), which, however, is not of equal importance with the former because the Commentary consists merely of notes made by others from Luther's lectures, and the portion in question was not published till after Luther's death. Cp. on the latter, O. Scheel, "Die Entwicklung Luthers," etc. ("Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgesch.," No. 100, pp. 61–230), p. 107 f.

'justice of God,' which according to the use and custom of all teachers I had been taught to interpret in the philosophical sense, namely, as referring to the formal and active justice by which God is just and punishes the sinners and the unjust. Although I was a blameless monk, I felt myself as a sinner before God, suffered great trouble of conscience and was unable to look with confidence on God as propitiated by my satisfaction, therefore I did not love, but on the contrary, hated, the just God Who punishes sinners; I was angry with Him with furious murmuring, and said: The unhappy sinners and those who owing to original sin are for all eternity rejected are already sufficiently oppressed by every kind of misfortune owing to the Ten Commandments, and as though this were not enough God wills [according to Rom. i.] by means of the gospel to heap pain on pain, and threatens us with His Justice and His Anger even in the gospel."[1]

In his Table-Talk, as reported by Heydenreich, he says in the winter of 1542–43 in a quite similar way: "These words were always in my mind. Wherever the 'Justice of God' occurs in Scripture I was only able to understand this to mean the justice by which He Himself is just and judges according to justice. . . . I stood there and knocked for someone to open to me, but no one came to undo the door; I did not know what to make of it. . . . Before finding the solution I shuddered with horror, I hated the Psalms and the Scripture where the justice of God occurs, which I took to mean that He was just and the Judge of sinners, but not that He was our Justification and our imputed righteousness." "The whole of Scripture stood like a wall in front of me."[2]

"As often as I read that the Justice of God was revealed in the Gospel," he says in his Commentary on Genesis, "I wished that God had never revealed the Gospel, for who could love an angry God Who judges and condemns?"[3]

"This word Justice," he says in another Commentary in 1532, "cost me much sweat (*'magno sudore mihi constitit'*). To interpret this as though it meant the justice according to which God damns the wicked is not merely unfounded but very dangerous; it awakens in the heart great hatred of God and His Justice; for who can love Him Who treats the sinner according to justice?

[1] The rest of the passage is given below, p. 391. The contents will first be made clear by quotations from parallel statements of Luther's.
[2] Mathesius, "Table-Talk," p. 309.
[3] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 7, p. 74.

Never forget that God's justice means that justice by which we are justified ; it is the gift of the remission of sins."[1]

That in truth it "cost him much sweat" before he was able to overcome the objections suggested by the justice of God itself, is proved by other and stronger allusions of Luther to the interior storms he underwent at this crisis. We refer to other statements in which, as above, he is speaking of Bible passages containing the expression Justice of God. Thus for instance : "The words just and Justice of God were like a lightning-flash in my conscience ('*fulmen in conscientia*') ; when I heard them, they at once filled me with terror. I thought God is Just and therefore He punishes."[2] "That word *iustitia*," he said in September, 1538, "was a thunder-clap to my heart. When as a papist I read : 'Deliver me in Thy Justice' (Ps. xxx. 2), and 'In Thy Truth,' etc., I immediately represented to myself the avenging Justice and the fury of an angry God. In my heart I hated Paul when I read : 'The Justice of God is revealed in the Gospel' . . . till at last in my affliction a remedy presented itself."[3]

Here we may mention some statements, which, though they belong to his later, fictitious portrayal of his spiritual development,[4] nevertheless contain an element of truth concerning his inner life at the time when he was still a monk, and probably during those very months when he was excitedly and confusedly brooding over the assurance of salvation. In reality they merely describe in greater detail what the above passages relate of his dread of God's Justice, though they also falsely charge all papists and all monks with being full of servile fear for the Judge, and forming a school of despair.

"We fled from Christ," he says in one of these remarkable passages, "as from the devil ; for we were taught that everyone must appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ with his works and orders. . . . The Gospel tells us that Christ does not come as a Judge but as a Saviour ; but the monks taught the contrary, namely, that He was to be our Judge."[5] Now, he says, elsewhere, the word of God which has been re-discovered "depicts Christ as our Justice." But in the monastery he, like all the others, had "fallen away from the faith," and therefore his "heart trembled and palpitated for fear lest God should not be gracious" to him. "I often shuddered at the name of Jesus and when I looked at Him on the cross, He seemed to me like a lightning-flash."[6]

He had often, he assures us, been forced to say : "I wish there were no God,"[7] "and none of them looked upon my unbelief as a sin."[8]

It was "simple idolatry, for I did not believe in Christ but

[1] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 19, p. 130. Exposition of Psalm li.
[2] From Khummer's Notes in Seidemann's edition of Lauterbach's "Tagebuch," p. 81.
[3] Lauterbach, "Tagebuch," p. 130.
[4] See volume vi., xxxvii.
[5] "Werke," Erl. ed., 47, p. 39 f.
[6] *Ibid.*, 45, p. 156.
[7] *Ibid.*, 46, p. 73.
[8] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 7, p. 74.

looked on Him as a stern and terrible Judge."[1] "I did not know how I stood towards God," "was unable to pray aright,"[2] indeed "no one knew anything" about prayer, "for we did not pray in faith in Christ."[3]

It was a "great martyrdom and bondage from which the gospel set us free";[4] I was, as it were, in a privy and in the kingdom of the devil.[5] He felt the terrors of the Divine Judgment, he assures us (possibly on account of the inward wrestling with the *iustitia Dei*) so that his "hair stood on end" when he thought of it. "At the monastery I shuddered when they spoke of death or the other life."[6]

"I was the most wretched man on earth; day and night there was nothing but howling and despair which no one was able to put an end to for me. Thus I was bathed and baptised and properly sweated in my monkery. Thanks be to God that I did not sweat myself to death, otherwise I should have long ago been in the depths of hell with my monkish baptism. For I knew Christ only as a stern Judge from Whom I wished to escape and was unable to do so. . . . Thus have they tortured many a worthy soul throughout life and at last thrown him in despair into the infernal abyss."[7]

"In this way I raged ('*Ita furebam*')," Luther continues in the Latin Preface where he speaks of his sudden discovery, "and my conscience caused me terror and confusion; I knocked imploringly at the verse of Paul (Rom. i. 17) with a burning thirst to know what it meant." He now describes the actual inward experience.

"At last, while brooding day and night, by the mercy of God I noticed the connection between the words: the Justice of God is revealed therein [in the gospel], as it is written, 'The just man liveth by faith.' Then I began to understand the Justice of God as that by which the just man lives by the gift of God, viz. by faith; [I saw that] the sense is this: 'By the gospel, justice, i.e. the passive justice of God, is revealed by which the merciful God justifies by faith, as it is written: 'The just man liveth by faith.' Then I felt myself born again and fancied I had passed through the gates of Paradise. The whole of Scripture thereupon appeared to me in quite a different light. I ran rapidly through the passages in question as they lived in my memory and compared them with other expressions, such as: 'Work of God,' i.e. the work which God carries on in us; 'Power of God,' by which He makes us strong; 'Wisdom of God,' by which He makes us wise; likewise the 'Strength of God,' 'Salvation of God,' and 'Honour of God.' Then I extolled that sweetest word, Justice, with as much love as I had previously hated it, and this

[1] "Werke," Erl. ed., 49, p. 27.
[2] *Ibid.*, 17, p. 139 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, 44, p. 354.
[4] *Ibid.*, 59, p. 10.
[5] In Galat., I, p. 109.
[6] "Werke," Erl. ed., 51, p. 146.
[7] *Ibid.*, 31, p. 279.

passage of Paul's became to me in very truth the gate of Paradise." He adds that the reading of Augustine had strengthened him in his interpretation, and, "provided with better weapons by means of this experience, I set about the exposition of the Psalms for the second time"; this work was, however, interrupted by the Diet of Worms.

Luther, it is true, does not speak here of the monastery tower as the scene of his experience, but this is described quite plainly in his other statements given below. In these the privy situated above the "Hypocaustum" is mentioned as the place where the discovery took place. They at the same time complete and confirm the account given in the Preface of the antecedents of this new enlightenment, i.e. the immediately preceding terrors of God's avenging justice, the time it happened, viz. when Luther was engaged on the Psalms, and finally, the subject-matter of the experience.

The accounts from Luther's own lips must here be considered collectively.

Not only do they correspond exactly with Luther's condition of mind, as described above, but also, according to the chronological account already given of the development of his teaching, with the time he recommenced his work on the Psalms, 1518–19, which period Luther expressly mentions in the Preface as the date of the incident.[1] It is not necessary, indeed, when we consider the above description of the course of his development, not possible, to assign an earlier date to the incident, though some have recently pushed it back to a time prior to his first exposition on the Psalms. Others, on account of some minor inexactitudes which occur in the principal account given in 1545 (see below, p. 399), hold it to be a fanciful invention of Luther in his old age in which he was merely summing up the result of a long inward process. If every circumstance be calmly weighed the historian must however, in the main, support Luther's account; he is not free to sacrifice the valuable source of knowledge, of such vast importance in arriving at an estimate of Luther's personality, presented by these testimonies.

In what follows Luther's other testimonies to the same effect as that contained in the Preface, will be duly brought forward and their peculiarities noted.

[1] "*Cœpi psalterium secundo interpretari. . . . Eo anno (MDXIX) iam redieram ad psalterium denuo interpretandum.*"

The first testimony is to be found in Johann Schlaginhaufen's notes and speaks of the fears which the thought of God's avenging justice habitually caused Luther and from which the discovery delivered him.[1] This pupil of Luther's relates, in an abbreviated Latin form, the following communication which he received from Luther between June and September, 1532, i.e. thirteen years before the Preface: "The words just and Justice were like a flash of lightning in my conscience. When I heard them I was filled with terror [and thought]: Is He just? Then He will punish; 'The just man liveth by faith,' 'the Justice of God is made manifest without the law' (cp. Rom. iii. 21); our life therefore comes of faith; God's Justice must be the salvation of everyone who believes. Then my conscience at once comforted itself: Surely it is the Justice of God which justifies us and saves us; and this word (*iustitia*) became more pleasing to me." "This art," Schlaginhaufen proceeds in Luther's own German, "the *Spiritus sanctus* infused into me in this Cl." (see p. 396).

The fear of the Divine Justice also appears in the foreground in the account of the incident in Luther's Table-Talk in September, 1540, as preserved by Johann Mathesius.[2] "At the outset when I read and sang in the Psalm [every evening at Compline] the words: '*In iustitia tua libera me*,' I was afraid and hated the words: '*iustitia Dei*,' '*iudicium Dei*,' '*opus Dei*.' For I thought nothing less than that '*iustitia Dei*' meant His strict Judgment. And if He was to save me according to His strict Judgment I should be lost for ever. But '*misericordiam Dei*,' '*adiutorium Dei*,' those words pleased me better." But it was only after the light of a true understanding of God's Justice had risen upon me that "I began to relish the Psalter."

The notes on Luther's Table-Talk made by his friend Master Caspar Heydenreich, dating from the winter 1542-43, and edited by Kroker in 1903 from the collection of Mathesius, must also be considered.[3]

Mathesius records them under the descriptive title: "*Evangelii occasio renascentis per Doctorem.*" He plainly thought, agreeably with Luther's own opinion and that of his pupils, that the enlightenment he had received on the text "The just man liveth by faith" was the most important, or at least one of the most important causes of "the new birth of the Gospel through the Doctor"—Luther. And, as a matter of fact, Luther's conviction, which was shared by his pupils, that this saving interpretation had been infused by the Holy Spirit, sufficiently explains why so much stress should be laid on this incident, and also why the recipient of the said illumination so frequently recurs to it.

Under the above title we find Heydenreich's lengthy account, taken from Luther's own lips, which agrees entirely with the statements of the Preface and, in particular, dwells on Luther's

[1] Schlaginhaufen, "Tischreden" (1531–1532), p. 108.
[2] Mathesius, "Tischreden," p. 211 f. [3] Kroker's edition, p. 309.

ecstasy of joy at the discovery ("*Cum hoc invenissem, ita delectabar, in tanta lætitia, ut nihil supra*").

In several of the accounts the Psalms are represented as the primary cause of the struggles that went on in Luther's soul, and the correct comprehension of them as one of the first fruits of his new discernment. Then "I first relished the Psalter," Luther says in Mathesius's account, and in Heydenreich's notes he declares: "Whereas I formerly hated the Psalms and the Scripture where mention was made of the Justice of God, the way was now clear to me when I read in the Psalms: 'Deliver me in Thy Justice' and 'Deliver me in Thy mercy,'" for God's mercy, by which He justifies us with His grace, had, from that time onward, come to mean the same to him as "the righteousness of God."

In Anton Lauterbach's Diary of 1538 two passages from the Psalms are likewise quoted as the cause of Luther's trouble of conscience,[1] and in the Halle MS. of the "Colloquia" which Bindseil edited, and which is based on Lauterbach's collection, a similar uneasiness is said to have been induced by the Psalms in priests generally: "When, in Popery, we read the verses [in question] we immediately thought of the avenging Justice . . . but when I took into consideration what follows . . . I became joyful," the right interpretation of the passage concerning the just man who lives by faith "supplied a remedy for all who were afflicted" ("*afflictis remedium contigit*").[2]

Another passage in the Psalms which caused him trouble is quoted by Luther when referring to the event in his Commentary on Psalm l. (li.), which he wrote in 1532: "*Exsultabit lingua mea iustitiam tuam*" (verse 16); as the biblical view of Justice had been obscured in his mind and in that of all, he had been unable to understand how it was possible to praise the avenging Justice in the Psalms.[3]

Thus, there is no doubt that the Psalms were the actual occasion of his discovery and his statement in the Preface of 1545 with regard to the time it occurred is thereby confirmed.[4]

[1] Lauterbach, "Tagebuch," p. 130.

[2] "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 2, p. 275. Cp. 1, p. 52.

[3] "Opp. Lat. exeg.," 19, p. 130.

[4] Kawerau also lays great stress on the connection between Luther's development and his work on the Psalms. "Theol. Studien und Kritiken," 77, 1904, p. 617. He even thinks the Psalms rather than the idea of the *Iustitia Dei* formed the starting-point. J. Ficker says in the Preface to his edition of the Commentary on Romans, p. lxxii, with regard to the testimony Luther gives concerning himself in his Præfatio: "He speaks of the second course [on the Psalms], but is, without doubt, thinking of the first." And O. Scheel (see above, p. 388, n. 3), p. 112 f., etc., prefers to fix the first course on the Psalms as the time of Luther's experience, and rests his assumption on the fact that Luther had "reforming ideas" present in his mind even before he wrote the Commentary on Romans. I, nevertheless, think I may appeal in opposition to this view to my preceding statements which touch on all the points raised, more particularly on the change which during the

Luther's pupil, Conrad Cordatus, in recording the matter in his diary is quite right in emphasising, in Luther's own words, that the knowledge gained by the incident was: "*Ergo ex fide est iustitia et ex iustitia vita*";[1] this is also done in the German Table-Talk, where we find a rather more detailed description of the inference drawn by Luther: "Then I became of another mind and from that moment thought: We are to live as justified by faith, and the Justice of God, which is His attribute, shall save all who believe; these verses will no longer affright the poor sinners and those who are troubled in conscience, but on the contrary comfort them."[2]

In the reference made to the event in the Commentary on Genesis (1540), the fact that the just man lives by faith is also placed in the foreground, and in this case we may safely rely on the Commentary though it was not printed till after Luther's death.[3] Here we read that it was the knowledge he had acquired "under the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost" that "our life comes from faith" that had "opened out the whole of Scripture to him, and heaven itself." This, according to the passage in question, was the result of the "anxious work," which at the outset he had devoted to the comprehension of Romans i. 17. By the use of such an expression as "at the outset," "*primum*," the opening word of the whole passage which speaks of his development, he would appear to imply that it was then that the foundation was laid of the great evangelical truth concerning faith. This agrees with the title Mathesius bestows on his notes: "Occasion of the re-birth of the gospel by means of the Doctor." In the passage in question in the Commentary on Genesis the consoling faith which he had been commissioned to teach is contrasted with the "unbelief" prevalent in Popery, which has lost all experience of this security. "They did not know that unbelief was a sin . . . and yet conscience cannot find any real comfort in works. Let us therefore enjoy the blessing of God which is now imparted to us."

Luther's utterances so far have referred more to the inward occasion, to the time and the subject-matter of the experience from which the dogma of absolute assurance of

period from 1515 to 1516 occurred in Luther, who in his first Commentary on the Psalms had been much more Catholic-minded. In fixing chronologically the date of the experience described in the Latin Præfatio I have the further advantage of being supported by Luther's clear and definite statement. As he esteemed his second course on the Psalms so highly (see above, p. 386) and consigned the first to oblivion, it is difficult to imagine that he mistook the one for the other. On the other hand, a mistake as to the sequence of those ideas which had made an impression on him in his youth might easily be explained by advancing years, like his mistakes concerning the time when he first became acquainted with certain authors (for instance, in this case, with Augustine).

[1] P. 423.

[2] "Werke," Erl. ed., 58, p. 370. Cp. pp. 336, 404

[3] See above, p. 388, n. 3.

salvation took its rise. The statements which follow, on the other hand, refer more to the place where the incident occurred, but they at the same time emphasise more particularly an element which was incidentally connected with it, namely, the inspiration by the Spirit of God.

In Lauterbach's "Colloquia" (ed. by Bindseil) the account commences with the words: "By the grace of God while thinking on one occasion on this tower [he seems to be pointing with his finger to the very spot] and hypocaustum, over those words: *Iustus ex fide vivit* . . . the Holy Ghost revealed the Scripture to me in this tower."[1] In Cordatus's diary both circumstances are mentioned: "On one occasion on this tower (where the privy of the monks was situated) when I was speculating on the words, etc., the Holy Ghost imparted to me this knowledge on this tower," i.e. to understand that "Justice comes of faith and life proceeds from Justice."[2] The editor, H. Wrampelmeyer, points out the fact that the mention of the "privy" is omitted in the later Table-Talk. In the German Table-Talk the inspiration is mentioned instead: "This knowledge was given to me by the Holy Ghost alone."[3] Rebenstock, in his valuable Latin Table-Talk, gives both together: "*in hac turri vel hypocausto*," and later: "*Hæc verba per Spiritum sanctum mihi revelata sunt.*"[4] The Lutheran pastor Caspar Khummer, who, in 1554, made a collection of Table-Talk, relates both circumstances (in Lauterbach's edition): "*Cum semel in hac turri speculabar*," and further on: "With this knowledge the Holy Ghost inspired me in this cloaca on the tower."[5]

The mention of the cloaca explains the entry of Johann Schlaginhaufen in his notes of Luther's own words in 1532: "This art the *Spiritus sanctus* infused into me in this Cl."[6] Cloaca is abbreviated into Cl., probably because Schlaginhaufen's copyist, was reluctant to write it out in full alongside of the account of the inspiration which Luther had received from the Holy Ghost; the editor suggests we should read "Capitel"; but the chapter-house is not to be thought of. Strange indeed are the interpretations which have been given, even in recent times, by the unlearned to many of the expressions in our texts. The "*locus secretus*" was supposed to be "a special place allotted to the monks in the tower," whereas it is clear that the "secret chamber" was simply the closet or privy, a word which occurs often enough in Luther's later abuse of the Papists. In olden times it was very usual to establish this adjunct on the city wall and its towers, the sewage having egress outside the town boundaries. The buildings on the city wall, of which we hear in

[1] Volume i., p. 52. Texts in detail, vol. vi., xlii, 6.
[2] P. 423. [3] "Werke," Erl. ed., 58, p. 370.
[4] In the notes to the "Colloquia," ed. Bindseil, 1, p. 52.
[5] J. K. Seidemann in his edition of Lauterbach, p. 81.
[6] See above, p. 393.

connection with Luther's monastery, were simply this and nothing more.[1] It has been said that by the word "tower" was meant a spiritual prison, namely, Popery, in which Luther languished until his enlightenment. In the hypocaustum was seen the spiritual sweat-bath in which the Monk was immersed till the time of his liberation by the new doctrine. As a matter of fact the allusion is to a heating apparatus, or warmed space, either below or in front of the privy, some such arrangement being common in monasteries. In his cell Luther had no stove.

We know from Luther's letters that there was a question in 1519 of allotting some other place outside the walls to the previously existing privy, or of rebuilding it. In the name of the community, Luther, in the middle of May, 1519, requested the Elector for permission to erect a "necessary building outside the walls on the moat," because the "gentlemen of the Wittenberg Council" delayed giving their sanction.[2] The result of the request is unknown; as, however, Cordatus, in the passage referring to the tower, makes use of the words: "in which the monks' privy was," it would seem at the time he wrote to have been no longer in the tower. The tower, however, remained, otherwise Luther would not have said, as he did, that the event took place on (or in) *this* tower. An historian of Luther's Augustinian priory stated in 1883, that, on the eastern side of the monastery, where the localities in question were probably situated, broken drain-pipes were to be seen up to the middle of last (the eighteenth) century.[3]

We must, therefore, represent the scene of the discovery as the secret chamber, which Luther expressly mentions, situated in a tower on the walls, probably on the eastern flank of the monastery. Constructed against the outer side of the tower, it probably projected over the moat, and, below, or in front of it, was the so-called hypocaustum.

As regards the revelation mentioned in the above passages, it is certain that Luther always traced back the knowledge so acquired to a special revelation, though not indeed to anything like a vision. Those verses on faith composed his "evangel," and he always declared with regard to this "evangel" that his discovery, made at the cost of so much labour, had been accompanied by a "revelation of the Holy Ghost."[4]

He speaks, for instance, of the time when he began to advocate his favourite doctrine as being the time of the "revelation of the evangel."[5] In answer to the fanatics who disputed his right to

[1] Lisch, in Enders, "Briefwechsel Luthers," 2, p. 35, n. 2.
[2] "Werke," Erl. ed., 53, p. 9. "Briefwechsel," 2, p. 35.
[3] H. Stein, "Gesch. des Lutherhauses," 1883, p. 19.
[4] See volume iii., xvi., 1, and volume vi., xxxvi., 4.
[5] "Werke," Erl. ed., 61, p. 338, "Tischreden."

the first place in the new teaching, he defends himself by saying that it was he who "not without the revelation of the Holy Ghost had again brought forward the gospel." The words contained in his letter to the Elector on his return from the Wartburg express a consciousness of a higher illumination, where he declares that he had received the "evangel, not from men, but solely from heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ."[1]

"Such self-reliance almost fills us with anxiety," says Adolf Harnack, of the latter and other writings. ". . . We seek in vain in the whole history of the Church for examples of men who could write such letters as that to the Elector, and the writings which Luther composed on the Wartburg. I can quite understand how Catholic critics see in these letters a 'delirious pride.' There is no choice except to judge Luther thus or to recognise that his place was an entirely peculiar one in the history of the Christian religion."[2] Harnack goes on to quote another extremely self-confident passage from Luther: "It pleased God well to reveal His Son through me," and then expresses his own opinion on the subject: "Luther's merit consisted in the circumstance that he was able to express what he had experienced, namely, the equation of the assurance of salvation, and faith"; [3] his self-reliance, Harnack adds, was the "true expression of a religious freedom such as Clement of Alexandria had painted as the disposition of a true Christian, and such as the mystics of all ages had in their way sought to attain to."[4]

Luther's claim to special illumination must, as hinted before, be restricted to the domain of the aforesaid doctrine of assurance of salvation; the whole of his doctrine did not come to him from God, or at least only by way of the inspiration of the Spirit, which, according to his own statements to be afterwards considered, is common to all well-disposed Christians who make use of Holy Scripture. Döllinger, also, says: This doctrine was the "only one which he really believed he had received by a special revelation of the Holy Ghost."[5]

Here again we perceive the fundamental importance attaching to the assurance of salvation as the corner-stone of his development. Unconsciously he had been driven forward to this extremity. Protestants quite rightly have often pointed out that the decisive question for him was: "How can I, a mere single individual, be assured of the forgiveness of sins and thereby of the mercy of God?" "He ventured,"

[1] On March 5, 1522, "Werke," Erl. ed., 53, p. 106 ("Briefwechsel," 3, p. 296).

[2] "Dogmengesch.," 3, p. 812.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 846. Harnack (p. 812) urges that Luther's self-confidence was combined with entire humility with respect to God.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] "Die Reformation," 3, p. 186. Döllinger is there speaking of the "doctrine of Imputation," by which he means the doctrine of faith alone which produces the assurance of salvation.

so it has been said, " to throw overboard all doubts as to the doctrine of assurance of salvation and to declare frankly and freely : it is impossible to trust God without being fully assured of redemption and salvation." " One thing only was still wanting (in his Commentary on Romans), namely, the clear perception of the fact, that the believer not only may be certain of his redemption, but that he must be so." The mystics helped him finally to arrive at the " joyous sense of trust in God " after he had been through " the hell of a troubled conscience " ; thus he was set " free from the last scruples and doubts, and reached the consciousness that he might, nay, must, rest assured of his God."[1]

The fact cannot be concealed, that in the above passages concerning the discovery on the tower, which for the most part date from a later period of Luther's life, there is some obscurity and confusion as to the subject. He says first : the Justice of God, by which God (Christ) is Just, is taught in the New Law and is also indicated in the Psalms, and this Justice of God is reckoned to us as our Justice. Secondly, we lay hold upon it only by faith, and thus our life comes from faith (fiducial faith with assurance of salvation), of which fact we must be joyfully confident. Thirdly : The difficulty caused by the idea of God's avenging Justice, which weighs down the soul, must therefore be fought against with determination. Of the first of these three elements Luther had made personal experience long before this time ; its earliest expression is at the commencement of the Commentary on Romans, also in the well-known letter to Spenlein of April 7, 1516. He had therefore no right to speak of it as forming the subject of his newly acquired knowledge. The second element on the other hand was really new, and gave him the answer to the anxious question : How is the imputed Justice of God to become mine ? Not by self-annihilation, not by *humilitas,* not by yearning prayer and other works which hitherto he had proposed as the means, but by faith only which had assured him of " regeneration," of heavenly revelations, etc. Concerning the third element no more need be said here, however greedily he may have seized the semblance of comfort which

[1] So H. Böhmer, " Luther im Lichte der neueren Forschung "[2], 1910, pp. 45, 57, 58.

the discovery afforded him, passing from the storms of his crisis into what he took to be a safe haven of peace.

The illusory talisman of absolute assurance of salvation was the result of the second stage of his development.

3. Legends. Storm Signals

On looking back in later years upon the course of his spiritual progress in the monastery, Luther was unable to distinguish clearly between the various stages of his development. The incident in the tower, which had left the strongest impression on his memory, drew the first stage more and more into the foreground in his imagination, so that in his accounts he assigns to it an undue prominence to the disadvantage of the two others. Hence the want of clearness noticeable in his statements with regard to the same.

We find not merely obscurity, but actual error, particularly in his account of the traditional interpretation and that which he had himself begun to advocate of the *Iustitia Dei* (Rom. i. 17). Luther is, in this matter, the originator of the great legend still current even in our own day, which represents him as a Columbus discovering therein the central truth set forth by Paul; no one had been able to find the key to the passage before his glance penetrated to the truth. All the learned men of earlier times had said that *iustitia* there meant the avenging Justice of an angry God. As a matter of fact, in Luther's lectures on Genesis in 1540–41,[1] it is asserted that all the doctors of the Church, with the exception of Augustine, had misunderstood the verses Romans i. 16 f.; Luther's Preface to his Latin works to some extent presupposes the same, for he says that he had, "according to the custom and use of all doctors" ("*usu et consuetudine omnium doctorum doctus*"), understood the passage as meaning that justice "by which God is Just and punishes sin," and only Augustine, with whom he had made common cause, had found the right interpretation ("*iustitiam Dei interpretatur, qua nos Deus induit*"), although even the latter did not teach imputation clearly (see above, p. 392).[2]

[1] See above, p. 388, n. 3. We can hardly assume that such a statement was an error of the Notes; it is more probable that Luther made a mistake in his verbal delivery.

[2] In other statements, such as that related by Heydenreich (above, p. 393), he assumes that no doctor was able to supply him with the right explanation: "No one came to open the door," etc.

"As a matter of fact, however, the exact opposite is the case: all the mediæval doctors whom he studied as a monk, Peter Lombard, Lyra and Paul of Burgos, gave, as can be proved, the same interpretation as Augustine. Thus Luther was completely at sea as to the handling of this, to him most important, passage."[1] Luther in his Preface says that contrary to all expectation ("*praeter spem*") he had, after his own discovery, found in St. Augustine's "*De spiritu et littera*" an interpretation which agreed with his own, and that this caused him fresh joy, although Augustine expresses himself imperfectly with regard to the same. Denifle, on the other hand, proves by the testimony of more than sixty interpreters of antiquity, that all are unanimous in taking the *iustitia Dei* in St. Paul in the same sense as St. Augustine, viz. as the Justice by which God renders men just.[2] The demonstration is conducted with "commendable accuracy and fulness."[3]

Luther himself, strange to say, at an earlier date and previous to the Tower incident, had repeatedly employed the correct interpretation. We can only suppose that it then made no impression on him, at any rate, no such impression as the incident on the Tower. He makes use of it with special reference to its older representatives, in the marginal notes to the Sentences of Peter Lombard, 1509–10,[4] then in the Commentary on the Psalms, and finally even in the Commentary on Romans, where he twice quotes Augustine and even the "*De spiritu et littera.*"

It is true that on these occasions he passes over the passage in the Epistle without displaying any particular interest, i.e. without laying on it the stress he does at a later date. Another difference is also noticeable. Luther has introduced since 1518 an entirely new idea, which he had not before, into

[1] Thus Böhmer, *ibid.*, p. 35.

[2] Denifle, "Luther und Luthertum," 1². "Quellenbelege; die abendländischen Schriftausleger bis Luther über *iustitia Dei* (Rom. i. 17) und *iustificatio*," 1905. Among the older interpreters Abailard alone may be an exception.

[3] Ficker in the Preface, p. lxxix.

[4] Cp. Böhmer², p. 47: "It is a matter of interest that he refers for the interpretation to a work much used in that period, the 'Biblia cum glossa ordinaria,' printed at Basle by Froben, 1508. It is plain that he looked up this gloss on the Epistle." On the strength of this Böhmer thought himself entitled to say: "The birth-hour of the Reformation falls in the winter 1508–9. . . . Its birthplace was the Black Monastery at Wittenberg"; but "it was only quite slowly that Luther lived himself into his new religious views."

his interpretation of the *iustitia Dei*. In it he finds not only that the justice which comes from God justifies us, but that it is bestowed upon us solely and directly by means of a trusting faith, and that thus a "life" in grace is opened up to man of which he must be infallibly certain in his innermost consciousness.

In his accounts, says Loofs, "we have documentary proof of impaired memory." "It is plain that Luther's memory, in the course of years, and owing to his '*odium papæ*,' had, as we can well understand, become inaccurate with regard to pre-Reformation conditions."[1] The "*odium papæ*" would certainly seem to have been concerned in his placing in the forefront his supposed re-discovery of an exegesis which Popery had forgotten.

Merely in order to throw light on the sequel of the great legend in our own times, we may here remark that it is difficult to understand the displeasure expressed by a modern Church historian and admirer of Luther, when some Protestants dared to agree with Denifle's lengthy demonstration of the real exegetical history of Romans i. 17. An impartial theologian, amongst others, expressed himself as follows in a periodical: "Denifle has proved beyond a doubt that Luther was wrong when he asserted that the earlier doctors had almost without exception taken the *iustitia Dei*, Rom. i. 17, in the sense of the Divine anger."[2] These words roused the admirer we have in mind to reply immediately as follows in the "Theologisches Literaturblatt" of Leipzig: "Does then the writer not perceive what the result must be for Luther's character?" Of two things, one, he says, either Luther lied, or he acted most unscrupulously and never consulted the earlier doctors.[3]

The new discovery not only filled Luther with blind courage and defiant presumption in the defence of his previous teaching, but also lent a giant strength to his action as a reformer of ecclesiastical conditions against Rome's abuses. He now begins to act as a spokesman of the nation and to constitute himself the leader of the already existing anti-Roman movement in Germany.

He now persuades himself more strongly than ever that he is in possession of a truth which is to be suppressed by Italian trickery and imperiousness, if not by "poison and the dagger," as was being planned in Italy. Rome had ravaged Scripture and the Church, her name should be Babylon: this (Apocalyptic) Beast, this Antichrist, must be exposed before the world, other-

[1] Loofs, "Dogmengesch."[4], p. 688 f. Loofs remarks concerning the statements on Augustine: "Luther was also mistaken with regard to this [the time and the manner of his experience]." My view of the state of the case differs, however, from that of Loofs, Braun, Böhmer, Scheel, etc.

[2] "Die Reformation," Lit. Beilage, September, 1905.

[3] "Theologisches Literaturblatt," 26, 1905, col. 507.

wise he might as well surrender his theology and allow it to perish; "I do not care if even my friends say I have lost my reason; it must be so; I have awaited this hour when they should be offended in me, as the disciples and friends of Christ were in Christ (Matt. xxvi. 31; Mark xiv. 27); truth must stand by its divine strength, not by mine or yours or that of any man."[1]

"It is only we Germans on whom the Empire descended, who have strengthened the power of the Popes so far as we could. For our punishment we have had to endure them as masters in cursing and abuse, and now as robbers also by means of pallium-fees and taxes on the bishoprics."[2]

In the Preface to the Commentary on Galatians he sent forth a call to the Germans and their Princes, which anticipates his later pamphlet "To the Nobility of the German Nation," in the same way as the ideas contained in his work on the Twofold Justice serve as a prelude to the booklet "On the Freedom of a Christian Man." "Those godless windbags, Prierias, Cajetan and their fellows, abuse us as German clowns, simpletons, beasts, barbarians, and mock at the incredible patience with which we allow ourselves to be deceived and robbed. All praise therefore to the German Princes for recently [1518], at Augsburg, refusing the tenths, twentieths and fiftieths to the Roman Curia, notwithstanding that they knew the cursed Roman Council [5th of the Lateran] had sanctioned these taxes. They recognised that the Pope and the Council had erred . . . that the legates of the Curia are only after gold and more gold. The example of these lay theologians is especially worthy of imitation. . . . It is a proof of greater piety when the Princes and other folk of any degree oppose the Curia than if they were to take up arms against the Turk."[3]

As we shall see, it was not Ulrich von Hutten who first roused Luther to such language against Rome, and to the stirring up of a false patriotism. Hutten's letters to him, and those of the other Humanists, are of later date, as also the congratulations and exhortations of the Humanist Crotus Rubeanus. It is a legend to attribute the raising of the standard of the Reformation principally to the Humanists and revolutionary knights. The fact that its origin may be traced back to 1521 does not make it one whit more credible historically. The air, in any case, was full of the anti-Roman spirit of revolt breathed by the Humanists and knights. The Wittenberg Monk had become acquainted with this spirit and found it sympathetic. How well it suited his purpose will be shown in the next chapter.

[1] To Spalatin, February 24, 1519, "Briefwechsel," 2, p. 2: "*Italicæ subtilitates.*"

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[3] Cp. Böhmer[2], p. 63

The subversive doctrines which he had now at length fully developed in the quiet of his monastery held the first place among the factors which drove him onwards; in so far as these doctrines were in very truth his own production, born of his own heart and brain amid incredible anxieties and struggles, we may, nay must, say that it was a new and independent task which he undertook, and that his was the labour and his the results. What Luther with his subversive theology propounded from that time forward, what he, with his chief doctrine of justification by faith and the appropriation of salvation, began to set in the place of the old teaching, was "in no way the necessary product of the various factors which had assisted in his education, but rather something new, original and never before known, only to be accounted for by Luther's own extraordinary genius." [1] In this sense the entire lack of originality with which he has frequently been reproached must also be relegated to the domain of legend. In attacking him to-day, the tactics which commended themselves to the older theologians, who knew little of his history, or at any rate of the course of his interior development, should no longer be resorted to. Their plan was to range all his doctrines under some one or other of the older heresies—even though only the germ of his errors was to be found in former ages—and then sapiently to declare he had merely gone about collecting his errors from the various olden heretics. It is quite a different matter that like errors are so frequently met with in history even in most unexpected quarters; it is due to their many-sidedness and to their windings and aberrations. The truth which is vouched for by the Church pursues its own straight, undeviating path, from the earliest disciples of Christ down to our own times, and in its quiet, immutable splendour is infinitely more original than any error, however new and modern it may claim to be.

[1] Böhmer[2], p. 60.

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